

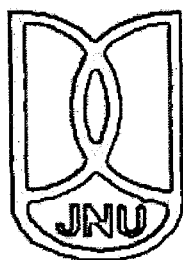
**TRANSNATIONAL PUBLIC SPHERES AS NEW SPACES OF
DEMOCRACY**

Study of Diaspora as driver of change in Rural Punjab

Dissertation submitted to the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal
Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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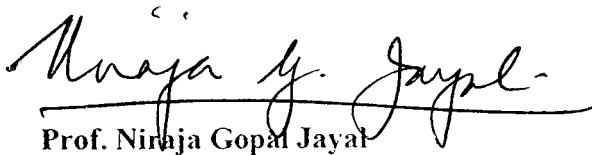
DECLARATION

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Transnational Public Spheres as New Spaces of Democracy: Study of Diaspora as Driver of Change in Rural Punjab**” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is my own work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.


Apneet Riyait


CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before examiners for evaluation.



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Dedicated to

Mom and Dad

...Your aspirations are my inspiration.

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I take up the entire responsibility of any omissions and imperfections in the work.


Apneet Riyait

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AVR	Assisted Voluntary Return
CIDA	Canadian International Development Aid Agency
DBS	Digital Broadcasting Satellite
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GNNET	Guru Nanak Nursing Education Trust
HTA	Home Town Association
ICSF	Indo-Canadian Friendship Society
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMA	Institute for Mexicans Abroad
INGOs	International Non Governmental Organizations
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MIDA	Migration for Development in Africa
MNC	Multi National Corporation
NELM	New Economics of Labour Management
NRDSP	National Rural Development Society of Palahi
NRI	Non Resident Indian
NRP	Non Resident Punjabi
OCAO	Overseas Chinese Affairs Office
OCIs	Overseas Citizens of India
OCPs	Overseas Chinese Professionals
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PIO	Person of Indian Origin
REMPLOD	Reintegration of Emigrant Manpower and Promotion Of Local Opportunities for Development
STAC	Science and Technology Advisory Council
TOKTEN	Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VLIB	Village Life Improvement Board
VLIF	Village Life Improvement Fund

*C*ONCEPTUALIZING TRANSNATIONAL PUBLIC SPHERES

Introduction

Local change is permeated by a number of different actors - state, bureaucracy, civil society etc. Until the late eighties, change and development were state led; but in the wake of the neo liberal paradigm and its adoption by various countries, including India, the context for policy development has shifted considerably. Now, governments are faced with a shifting set of responsibilities and interlocutors with whom to negotiate over development alternatives and policy directions. The old ones are increasingly giving way to new actors to emerge as proactive participants in the twin process of change and development. In other words, over the years, there has been a shifting of the terrain on which the state operates. One of the forces behind this shift is that of globalization.

With the intensification of the process of globalization, national systems of democratic governance are facing pressures, both externally and internally. The external pressures result from the emergence of policy issues that are increasingly becoming transnational, for example; human rights, governance of the global economy, ecological concerns, international terrorism, etc. At the same time, political power and activity extend more and more beyond national boundaries, blurring traditional distinctions between domestic and international, territorial and non territorial. A global mixed-actor system is emerging which has enlarged the sphere of participation to include civil society actors, transnational pressure groups etc. New spaces are being created for both political as well as civic participation. The internal pressures manifest themselves in the fact that universalizing categories of citizenship and representation are being progressively

questioned. This calls for studying new forms of participation and an assessment of this in relation to the structure and processes of development. In political theory, the response to these pressures has been the emergence of theories of deliberative democracy and debates about the 'rise of public spheres as the new spaces for new developmental actors to emerge.'¹

1.1 *Strengthening Democracy and Development via Public sphere*

Democracy is a political ideal that applies principally to the arrangements for making binding collective decisions. Most countries today have developed some form of electoral democracy. It formally secures the inclusion of citizens, their interests and concerns into the government by means of aggregation of individual interests through political parties, parliaments and other representative mechanisms. For the majority of citizens, participation in this system is reduced to voting in more or less frequent political elections. However, in addition, there are indirect and voluntary forms of participation in the political and governance processes, for example, through active involvement in political parties, interest groups and civil society associations.

By addressing problems through widespread participation, democracy not only assumes the access to information but also an exposure to a range of alternative solutions to practical problems of collective action and development. The emergence of *public spheres* is a direct outcome of this emphasis on alternative avenues within democracy.

The concept of Public Sphere was popularized by Jürgen Habermas in his famous book *Structural Transformations of Public Sphere*. He identified it as a space of institutions and practices between the private interests of everyday life in civil society and the realm of state power. Habermas conceives of public sphere as the space existing between the

¹ Merilee S.Grindle, 'Good Enough Governance Revisited', *Development Policy Review*, vol. 25 no.5, September 2007, pp.533-574.

authority of the state and the realm of family; it is the space in which organizations such as political parties, NGOs and media collectively and commonly referred to as the civil society, operate. Neither a system nor an institution, Habermas notes that

the public sphere is a network for communicating information and points of view...the capacity of the public sphere is limited. But this capacity must be utilized to oversee the further treatment of problems that takes place inside the political system.²

Using Habermas' meaning of the term, public sphere is an imagined sphere or space constituted of different actors sharing common language and the same normative, objective and subjective worlds. Such a sphere requires broad participation of a number of different actors as a group, contributing to governance processes in their own way. Habermas argues that public sphere is particularly adept at identifying societal issues as its communication networks are more sensitive than those of the political system. This public realm, therefore, has an integral role in ensuring that the state remains responsive to governance shortcomings as perceived by the society and thus becomes an ideal arena in which to advocate change.³

Off late, with ideas like 'good governance' and 'capacity building' gaining currency in the administrative discourse, there have been a whole range of policy initiatives aimed at reducing administrative bureaucracy, high levels of delays, corruption and also at encouraging more openness and effective participation in decision-making. This emphasis on participatory development has led to the rise of what Fox and Starn call 'formal and informal institutions at the border of state and civil society'.⁴ As argued by Sarah Radcliffe, "neo liberal paradigm offers both spaces for closure of political options while opening up other-very different and highly contested spaces of political

² Jurgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Cambridge, 1996, p. 359.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Fox, Richard G. and Starn. Orin, as cited in Sarah Radcliffe, 'Development, the State, and Transnational Political Connections: State and Subject Formations in Latin America.', *Global Networks*, vol.1 no.1, 2001, p.22.

engagement.”⁵ Transnationalism or Transnational networks are such new spatial formations that have reshaped the institutionalization of development, through the creation of public spheres.

1.2 *TRANSNATIONALISM: Meaning and Context*

1.2.1 **Defining the concept**

Not very long ago, Arjun Appadurai stressed that “we need to think ourselves beyond the nation.”⁶ This renewed thinking about the nation state is largely informed by the unprecedented transnationalization of people and ideas across borders. Thus the challenge that the concept of transnationalism throws up is to go beyond a narrow state-centered approach by considering political communities and systems of rights that emerge at levels of governance above or below those of the independent state or that which cut across international borders.

Linda Basch et al., for instance, define transnationalism as :

the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-standard social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. Through constant mobility of people, labour, money and resources, immigrants now actively construct a transnational social field that extends beyond the single location, forming a distinct kind of ‘social field’ in which they maintain familial, economic, political and cultural ties.⁷

Similarly, Risse-Kappen defines Transnational relations as “regular interactions across national boundaries when at least one actor is a non state agent or does not operate on behalf of a national government.”⁸ However, ‘transnationalism’ understood as long distance networks is not an entirely new phenomenon. As Vertovec has argued:

⁵ Sarah Radcliffe, ‘Development, the State, and Transnational Political Connections: State and Subject Formations in Latin America.’, *Global Networks*, vol. 1 no.1, 2001, p.22

⁶ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, 1996, p.158.

⁷ Linda Basch, , Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc , *Nations Unbound: Transnational projects and de territorialized nation states*, New York, 1994, p.4

⁸ Thomas Risse-Kappen, (ed) , *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-state Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions*, Cambridge, 1995, p.3.

Transnationalism certainly preceded the 'nation'. Yet today these systems of ties, interactions, exchange and mobility function intensively and in real time while being spread throughout the world. New technologies, especially involving telecommunications, serve to connect such networks with increasing speed and efficiency. Transnationalism describes a condition in which despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common-however virtual-arena of activity.⁹

This renewed, intensified and technology enabled transnational engagement of organizations, states and subjects provides ample room for agency and for dynamic processes of change, thereby shaping political and development outcomes. Thus, without exaggerating the degree of globalization and de-territorialization, it is important to acknowledge the major transformations brought about by this denationalization of spaces facilitated by transnational flows.

1.2.2 Transnationalism from 'Above' and 'Below'

Transnationalism exists and operates at multiple levels. Most research on transnational phenomenon till the late seventies focussed on what is called 'transnational from above'¹⁰ and its impact on nation states. Keohane and Nye, for example, argued that the power of nation-states was restricted by non-state agents such as transnational companies, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), transnational social movements, etc. The more important underlying proposition was that the very power of nation-states could only be understood in the context by interdependencies created by non-state actors across borders.¹¹ Faist also reckons that

the conceptual and empirical analysis of the phenomena associated with the potential decoupling of state territory, demos and state authority have mostly been undertaken from a state-centric perspective, or from one

⁹ Steven Vertovec, 'Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.22 no.2, 1999, p.2.

¹⁰ The term was popularized by Guarnizo and Smith in their influential volume titled *Transnationalism from Below*, New Brunswick, 1998.

¹¹ Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston, 1977.

which privileges powerful transnational actors such as multinational companies.¹²

However, a decade later, the focus within the transnational discourse shifted away from politically powerful non state actors such as Multi National Companies (MNCs) which stood at the centre of theorization in political science to much less visible agents, namely international or transnational migrants constituting transnational communities named Diasporas. Guarnizo and Smith have aptly called this type of migrant transnationalism as ‘Transnationalism from below.’¹³ According to Faist, “this conceptual move to replace non-state actors such as transnational companies with international migrants is a useful supplement and corrective for the biased emphasis of earlier studies on ‘transnationalism from above’.”¹⁴

1.2.3 Diasporic Transnationalism

Among the various approaches to study transnationalism, the focus on migrant or diasporic transnationalism is gaining currency. Diasporas or migrant transnationalism is not only a growing phenomenon but arguably an important one in a globalized society, significantly impacting political and social outcomes. It is important to note, however, that migration is basically an international phenomenon in so far as it involves a movement of persons between the territorial jurisdictions of independent states; it becomes transnational only when it creates ‘overlapping memberships, rights and practices that reflect a simultaneous belonging of migrants to two different communities.’¹⁵

Transnationalism of this kind has come to challenge the traditional theories of democracy and citizenship as also the exclusive loyalties of the citizens towards a single state. The emergence and growing significance of *Diaspora* as a significant actor in transnational public spheres, constituted by both domestic and overseas actors and linked together by

¹² Thomas Faist, ‘The Transnational Turn’ in Sahoo, A.K. and Maharaj, B. (eds), *Sociology of Diaspora: A Reader. Vol. I.*, Jaipur, 2007, p.228.

¹³ Luis Guarnizo and Michael P. Smith, *The Locations of Transnationalism*, New Brunswick, 1998.

¹⁴ Faist, Op. Cit., p.233.

¹⁵ Rainer Baubock, ‘Towards a Political Theory of Migrant Transnationalism’, *International Migration Review*, vol. 37 no. 3, 2003, p. 705.

shared norms and values in fluid transnational networks, captures the idea that the civil society is on the move. At the same time it underlines a need to revitalize the traditions of civic action and participation for development and self governance.

1.3 Locating 'Diasporas' in globalization and transnational discourses

1.3.1. From 'dispersed populations' to 'transnational communities'

The concept of diaspora has been much debated during the past decade in terms of the essential and additional features that go with it, arguing which groups or communities could be or could not be designated as diaspora. De-territorialization, nationality and citizenship, forced or voluntary process of emigration, cultural identity, real or imaginary association with the place of origin including its replication symbolically and a desire to return are some of the parameters employed in this debate to define a diaspora.

To use Vertovec's definition, Diasporas are defined as

populations of migrant origins who are scattered among two or more destinations, between which there develop multifarious links involving flows and exchanges of people and resources- between the homeland and the destination countries and among destination countries.¹⁶

The term Diaspora, however, has evolved and its meaning has transformed over time. Scholars like William Safran¹⁷ and Gabriel Scheffer¹⁸ refer to the ethno national character of the term. For them, Diaspora is a socio political formation created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, where members regard themselves as of a particular ethno national origin.

¹⁶ Steven Vertovec, 'Migrant Transnationalism and Modes of Transformation', *International Migration Review*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2004, pp. 970-1001.

¹⁷ William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora*, vol.1 no.1, 1991, pp. 83-99.

¹⁸ Gabriel Scheffer, 'The Emergence of New Ethno National Diasporas' in Sahoo, A.K. and Maharaj, B. (eds), *Sociology of Diaspora: A Reader. Vol. 1*, Jaipur, 2007, pp.43-62.

Today, in the context of transnationalism and global networking, the usage of the term carries with it connotations relating to its transnational character. Robin Cohen's framework for defining and classifying diaspora approximates more closely to the contemporary meaning of the term. He acknowledges that diasporic communities "not only form a collective identity in their place of settlement or with their homeland but also share a common identity with members of same ethnic communities in other countries."¹⁹ Similarly, Judith Shuval has also tried to merge the concept of Diaspora in the globalization and transnationalism discourses.²⁰

Although it is true that transnational migration has a long history, and it is also true that earlier migrants also maintained linkages to their homelands, there is an element of truth in the debate surrounding contemporary migrants, as compared to earlier migrants when we talk about their networks and their imagined or virtual community. Contemporary Diasporas have created a transnational sphere for themselves which enables them to play a proactive role in the affairs of their homeland. The literature on the role played by Diaspora as a 'transnational community' however is still in its infancy and merits further research.

Transnational communities generally refer to the migrant communities, living in the host societies but maintain economic, political, social and emotional ties with their homeland and with other diasporic communities of the same origin. The establishment of this transnational community is related to more general processes of globalisation and deterritorialisation in the contemporary world. It is to be noted that the studies on globalization have amply and aptly described the increase in the intensity, velocity and scope of cross border exchanges. Such studies have mostly focussed on issues like financial transactions, the exchange of goods and services and cultures. Much less attention has been devoted to 'conceptualizing cross-border social and symbolic ties and hence social integration, such as the life-worlds of persons and groups who move around

¹⁹ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, London, 1997, p.32.

²⁰ Judith T. Shuval, 'Diaspora Migration: Definitional Ambiguities and a Theoretical Paradigm', *International Migration*, vol. 38 no.5, 2000, pp: 41-56 .

and maintain ties in a de-borderized world.²¹ For example, modern means of cheaper and more efficient modes of communication and transportation technology today have allowed immigrants to maintain transnational relations with their homeland as well as their land of settlement.

This process of ‘trans-territorialization’ raises intriguing questions concerning human agency and governance at national as well as local levels. In the words of Guarnizo and Smith, “the sending states or countries of emigration are insuring their own survival by contributing to the constitution of new bifocal subjects with dual citizenships and multiple identities. Inadvertently, this very process opens up interstitial social spaces which create multiple possibilities for novel forms of human agency.”²²

Thus, there is a remarkable omission in the literature within transnationalism because as argued earlier, it is obvious that transnational spaces are populated not only by multinational companies and political parties but also by diverse entities such as transnational communities and networks of diaspora and diasporic civil society organizations, many of which are politically and economically active actors. By constituting transnational public spheres hinged on networks and civil society formations, these communities are exercising noticeable impacts on local developmental and governance outcomes, especially in the countries of origin or the sending countries.

1.3.2 Diasporas as transnational communities

Vertovec identifies six distinct conceptual premises on which the meaning of transnationalism is grounded.²³ Based on these, Diasporas certainly qualify as significant transnational communities transforming notions of space, localities, territory, citizenship and cross border activism. Briefly, these premises are as below:

²¹ Faist, Op. Cit., p.228.

²² Guarnizo and Smith, Op. Cit., p.9.

²³ Vertovec , ‘Conceiving...Op. Cit., p.6.

1.3.2.1. *Social morphology*: The meaning of transnationalism which has perhaps been gaining most attention has to do with a kind of social formation spanning borders. Diasporas have become the paradigm in this understanding of transnationalism. According to Safran, one of the hallmarks of diaspora as a social form is the 'triadic relationship between globally dispersed yet collectively self identified ethnic groups, territorial states and contexts where such groups reside and the homeland states and contexts whence they or their forebears came.'²⁴ Another feature central to analysis of diasporas as transnational social formations are structures of relationships best described as networks. According to Manuel Castells, new technologies are at the heart of today's transnational networks. These technologies, according to Castells, do not altogether create new social patterns but they certainly reinforce pre-existing ones'.²⁵

Similarly, Gupta and Ferguson contend that:

Something like a transnational public sphere has certainly rendered any strictly bounded sense of community or locality obsolete. At the same time, it has enabled the creation of forms of solidarity and identity that do not rest on appropriation of space where contiguity and face-to-face contact are paramount.²⁶

Further, Wakeman suggests that:

The loosening of the bonds between people, wealth and territories which is concomitant with the rise of complex networks has altered the basis of many significant global interactions, while simultaneously calling into question the traditional definition of the state.²⁷

In these ways, the dispersed diasporas of the past have become today's transnational communities, sustained by a range of modes of social organization, mobility and communication.

²⁴ Safran, *Diasporas and Modern ...*, Op. Cit., pp: 83-99.

²⁵ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of Network Society*, Oxford, 1996, p.101.

²⁶ Akhil Gupta, and James Ferguson, 'Beyond Culture: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 7,1992, p. 9.

²⁷ Frederic Wakeman, 'Transnational and Comparative Research', *Items*, vol. 42 no. 4, 1988, p.86.

1.3.2.2. *Consciousness*: In the literature concerning transnational communities like the diasporas, there is a considerable discussion surrounding a kind of ‘consciousness’, marked by dual or multiple identifications. As pointed out by Schiller, Basch and Blanc, “while migrants identify more with one society than the other, the majority seem to maintain several identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation.”²⁸

James Clifford explains this dual consciousness in a rather interesting manner when he argues that :

the empowering paradox of diaspora is that dwelling here assumes a solidarity and connection there. But there is not necessarily a single place or an exclusive nation...It is the connection elsewhere that makes a difference here.²⁹

For Stuart Hall, the condition of diaspora or transnationalism is comprised of ever changing representations that provide an ‘imaginary coherence’ for a set of flexible identities.³⁰ Cohen develops Hall’s point of view with the observation that

transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination.³¹

Thus, diasporic transnationalism leads to a transformation of identity, awareness and other modes of consciousness.

1.3.3.3. *Mode of cultural reproduction*: Transnationalism is often associated with a fluidity of lifestyles, social institutions and everyday practices, with terms like syncretism, creolization and hybridity used to describe this fluidity. A significant channel

²⁸ Nina G. Schiller, Linda Basch and Szanton-Blanc, ‘Transnationalism : a new analytic framework for understanding migration’ in Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch & Cristina Szanton Blanc (eds), *Towards a Transnational Perspective on migration*, 1992, p.11.

²⁹ James Clifford, ‘Diaspora’, *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 9, 1994, p.332.

³⁰ Stuart Hall as cited in Steven Vertovec, *Conceiving...*, Op. Cit., p. 9.

³¹ Robin Cohen, ‘Diasporas and the nation-state: from victims to challengers’, *International Affairs*, vol.72 no. 3, 1996, p.516.

for the flow of cultural phenomenon and the transformation of identity is through global media and communications, particularly through the medium of 'micro electric transnationalism'³² represented by electronic bulletin boards and the Internet.

Several other forms of globalized media are having considerable impact on cultural reproduction among transnational communities. The expansion of satellite and cable networks has seen the growth of channels targeting specific ethnic diasporas where viewing is not solely passive. There are emerging multiple and complex ways in which these media are consumed.

1.3.3.4. *Avenue of capital*: Most studies focus on transnational corporations as the major institutional forms of transnational practices and the key to understanding globalization. Their systems of supply, production, marketing, investment, information transfer and management often create the paths along which much of the world's transnational activities flow. However, in addition to transnational corporations, the little players who comprise the bulk of transnational communities are making an ever greater impact. The relatively small amounts of money which migrants transfer as remittances to their places of origin now add up to more than \$100 billion world wide.

Beyond what they mean to the families receiving them, for national governments remittances represent the quickest and surest source of foreign exchange. This fact has prompted many countries to develop policies for the 'transnational reincorporation of nationals abroad into their market and polity.'³³ Such policies have impacts beyond the economic dimension. As Katharyne Mitchell observes, 'the interest of the state in attracting the investments of transmigrants widens the possibilities for new kinds of national narratives and understandings.'³⁴ Adding further to the argument Alejandro Portes notes:

³² Gaytri Spivak (1989) as cited in Vertovec, *Conceiving...*, Op. Cit., p. 7.

³³ Guarnizo and Smith, *The Locations...*, Op. Cit., p.133.

³⁴ Katharyne Mitchell, 'Transnational discourse: Bringing Geography Back In', *Antipode*, vol. 29, 1997, p.106.

transnational activities are cumulative in character. While original wave of these activities may be economic and their initiators can be properly labelled transnational entrepreneurs, subsequent activities encompass political, social, and cultural pursuits as well.³⁵

1.3.3.5. *Site of political engagement*: Transnationalism has provided new approaches for examining issues that have acquired new dimensions in a globalized world. Beck has rightly pointed out that ‘there is a new dialectic of global and local questions which do not fit into national politics, it is only through a transnational framework can they be properly posed, debated and resolved.’³⁶ A considerable amount of political activity is now undertaken transnationally, particularly due to intensified communication and exchange technologies which make possible rapid and far reaching forms of information dissemination, publicity and feedback, mobilization of support and enhancement of public participation and political organization. The most conventional forms of such activity are represented by International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs). According to Kriesberg, their transnational dimensions are reflected in their ability to provide and distribute resources, facilitate support in political campaigns, and provide a safe haven for activities of resistance which are illegal or dangerous in home countries.³⁷ Similarly, Transnational Social Movement Organizations work for progressive change in the areas of environment, human rights and development. The issues that concern these organizations are transboundary in character, and they draw upon a ‘planetization’ of people’s understanding.³⁸

Transnational political activities are also undertaken by diasporic communities. Cohen reasons that ‘awareness of their precarious situation may also propel members of diasporas to advance legal and civic causes and to be active in human rights and social justice issues.’³⁹ The politics of homeland engage members of diasporas or transnational communities in a variety of ways. Basch, Schiller and Szanton Blanc have argued that

³⁵ Alejandro Portes, ‘Globalization from Below: the Rise of Transnational Communities’, *Economic and Social Research Council(ESRC) Transnational Communities Programme Working Paper No.1*, 1998, p.14.

³⁶ Ulrich Beck, ‘The Cosmopolitan Manifesto’, *New Statesman*, 20th March, 1998, p.28.

³⁷ Louis Kriesberg as cited in Vertovec, *Conceiving...*, Op. Cit., p. 11.

³⁸ Cohen, *Diasporas and the...*, Op. Cit., pp. 507-520.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

expanded activities and intensified links are creating, in many respects, de-territorialized nation states.⁴⁰ Political parties now often establish offices abroad in order to canvass immigrants, while immigrants themselves organize to lobby for the home government. Emigrants increasingly are able to maintain or gain access to health and welfare benefits, property rights, voting rights, or citizenship in more than one country.

1.3.3.6. *Reconstruction of 'place' or 'space'*: Some studies proposed that transnationalism has changed people's relations to space particularly by creating 'social fields' that connect and position some actors in more than one country.⁴¹ Due to these new spaces, many people no longer associate themselves strongly with a particular locality. This, according to Appadurai, can largely be attributed to a condition of transnationalism which is characterized by, among other things, 'the growing disjuncture between territory, subjectivity, and collective social movement' and by 'the steady erosion of the relationship, principally due to the force and form of electronic mediation, between spatial and virtual neighbourhoods.'⁴² What has emerged instead is new 'translocalities' which provide ample space for transnational communities like diaspora to engage politically, socially and economically with their homelands. This engagement becomes effective through transnational public spheres that are created by diasporic communities.

1.4 Diasporas and the formation of Transnational public sphere.

To examine diasporas as significant actors constituting transnational public spheres reshaping developmental outcomes at local levels, it will be useful to briefly explicate the anchors of this public sphere. These are the categories which form the building blocks of the public spheres within which the diasporas operate at global as well as local levels. These categories remain useful in exploring the emergence, sustenance and functioning of transnational spheres in contemporary contexts.

⁴⁰ Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized national states*, Amsterdam, 1994, p.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Arjun Appadurai, 'The production of Locality' in Richard Fardon (ed.) *Counterworks: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*, London, 1995, p. 213

The public sphere in which the Diaspora operates is constituted by:

- a) Networks
- b) Diasporic civil society

Both of the above are broadly assisted by two building blocks:

Globalization which offers great opportunities hitherto never anticipated. It helps the overseas communities who are anchored on values, norms, histories etc. of origin to come together, connect with their countries of origin through a constructive dialogue and initiate progress by playing a proactive role. Assisted by the communication technology and declining importance of territory leads to a more real time interaction between these actors. Internet, World Wide Web, extended global wireless, mobile, satellite telecommunications or the Global Information System is the direct offshoot of this globalization process enabling and facilitating the formation of Diaspora communities. The convergence of these technologies have shattered the limits on our abilities to transmit knowledge and ideas, offering developing countries unprecedented opportunities to improve policy formation and execution and widen the range of opportunities for business and for the poor. In case of Diaspora, this Global Information System helps us in interpreting migration not necessarily as brain drain but more positively as a potential source of brain gain.

Social Capital: In the context of transnational communities like the diasporas, Portes argues that the “viability of their activities does not depend upon cumbersome legal covenants or the goodwill of government officials, but on the skills of individuals and the activation of their social capital.”⁴³ Social capital refers to solidarity ties with other members of the community, based on shared norms or trust, which in turn creates possibilities of a global – local interaction. Social capital offers a competitive advantage

⁴³ Alejandro Portes, ‘The study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an emergent research field’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.22 no. 2,1999, pp. 217-237.

in obtaining limited financial, material and human resources, because instead of expending time and energy negotiating access to these resources, people with social capital will be able to mobilize them directly and without difficulty, because they are trusted.⁴⁴ These networks and relationships that continue to exist following the relocation of the actor result in the creation of a transnational public sphere, facilitating the exchange of ideas, skills, information and finances across borders. For the World Bank, social capital refers to the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. This perspective has important implications for development theory, practice and policy. Conventional prescriptions for enhancing development prospects of communities and nations include improving education and health facilities, constructing competent and accountable political institutions. For World Bank, social capital speaks to each of these aspects.⁴⁵

1.4.1 Diaspora Networks

Actors in developing economies must have the capacity to acquire new knowledge, if they are to compete in the world economy. Because development depends on learning and learning depends on searching, development invariably depends on linking the domestic economy to the larger outside world, because state of the art ideas cannot be generated in isolation. International migration, skilled and unskilled both, is central for such learning and development. People from a country who have migrated to different countries i.e. Diasporas are such potential source of development if tapped or exploited systematically.

The global circulation of high skill and low skill labor from poor economies to rich ones and back is opening new possibilities for development, economic and social. The brain

⁴⁴ W.A Turner, 'Diaspora Knowledge Networks', Report of *International Committee of social Science Information and Documentation(ICSSD)*,

www.unesco.org/Diaspora_Knowledge_Networks/proposal.pdf, 2003, pp.1 -27.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

drain pattern of migration long drew many promising students from poor countries to lucrative and challenging careers in developed countries. Today, this pattern shows signs of turning into a back and forth movement, or Diaspora network, in which people still go abroad to study or work in the developed countries, but then use their own global networks, and especially those of their diasporas, to help build new establishments in their home countries.⁴⁶

There are also signs that emigrants with fewer skills forced by poverty to go abroad but long confined to dead end jobs in developed economies are also finding new career opportunities and acquiring newer skills. Whether these new skills can be redeployed back home is a question to be explored.

Diasporas, whether highly skilled or medium skilled, do not necessarily need to be investors or make financial contributions to have an impact on their home countries. They can serve as “bridges” by providing access to markets, sources of investment and expertise. Influential members of Diaspora can shape public debate; articulate reforms plans and help implement new projects. Policy expertise and managerial and marketing knowledge are the most significant resources of Diaspora networks.⁴⁷

Emphasizing the significance of Diasporic networks in comparison to multinational firms (another source of investment and transfer of skills, knowledge and technical know how) Kuznetsov and Sabel argue that since the actors in such networks are native sons and daughters, they are seldom suspected in their home countries. Further they state that the attraction of diaspora networks over multinational firms is that these networks promise to depoliticize the relationship between domestic actors and foreign actors from whom they learn. Network Diasporas, however is not self generating, context free solution to perennial problems of learning faced by developing regions, they co-evolve with the political and economic contexts within which they operate.

⁴⁶ Yevgeny Kuznetsov and Charles Sabel, ‘International Migration of Talent , Diaspora Networks and Development’, in Kuznetsov, Y., (ed), *Diaspora Networks and the International Migration of Skills*, Washington, 2006, p.7.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

The fact that skilled and unskilled expatriates can create enormous benefits for their countries of origin has been recognized in the recent years through the conspicuous contributions that the large, prosperous and well organized Chinese and Indian Diaspora have made to their home countries. It is important to note that while the success of Chinese Diaspora grew out of the traditional investment behavior of emigrant families that made their fortunes overseas; the success of Indian Diaspora is much more closely tied to recent emergence of the transnational innovation networks of the Diaspora members.

The Diaspora Network approach puts emphasis on creating social bonds. When highly qualified professionals elect to take up residence in a foreign country, understanding how they reconstitute their social capital is of crucial importance in validating the brain gain hypothesis. In assessing how they build up their networks, the focus should be less on the top down public policies than on 'bottom up' individual initiatives for taking part in co-development projects.

1.4.2 Diasporic Civil Society

Diasporic civil society comprising migrant associations in both origin and host countries, is an important group within the transnational civil society that has received scant attention. Diasporic civil society is also becoming significant in addressing development concerns in the countries of origin or the home countries, especially through the flow of material resources via the role of collective remittances. This migrant or diasporic civil society is locally rooted, yet transnational in reach. In other words, it is 'anchored locally-linked globally'⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Cathy McIlwaine, 'From Local to Global to Transnational Civil Society: Reframing Development Perspectives on the Non State Actor' *Geography Compass*, vol. 1 no. 6, 2007, pp: 1253-1281.

As the demand for migrant labour in the developed countries of the North continues, the immigrant population also grows. It is therefore expected that transnational activities will also increase, of which civil society organising is an important element.⁴⁹

Cathy McIlwaine examines this diasporic civil society by analyzing transnational linkages through an important phenomenon called the Home Town Associations (HTAs). Recognizing these HTAs as key players in the formation of transnational civil society, she notes that ‘these Home Town Associations are becoming micro level building blocks of global civil society.’⁵⁰ Reflecting global-local linkages, HTAs address both problems in home countries, as well as those in the country of settlement, constituting a public sphere. It is primarily through the lens of HTAs that Diasporic Civil Society has received most attention through the potential developmental effects of such organizations, especially their role in channelling remittances.

Highlighting the impact of diasporic civil society organizations, Goldring argues that the activities of transnational migrants or the diasporic civil society has led to a much more sophisticated interpretation of what development actually means, extending it beyond economic definitions to include social, cultural, ideological and political dimensions. He further notes that just as development is multidimensional, so are remittances; ‘they are not a unitary package, nor are they independent of context.’⁵¹ Adding to Goldring’s argument, Levitt highlights the significance of social remittances in the form of social practices, norms and ideas together with political remittances referring to political identities, demands and influence-apart from economic remittances in the form of money.⁵²

Most importantly, these remittances are thought to generate social capital in communities in host and origin countries as people need to organize together in order to spend them,

⁴⁹ Alejandro Portes. ‘The debates and significance of immigrant transnationalism.’, *Global Networks*, vol. 1 no. 3, 2001, pp 181-194.

⁵⁰ McIlwaine, Op. Cit., p.1269.

⁵¹ L Goldring, ‘Family and Collective Remittances to Mexico: a multidimensional typology’, *Development and Change*, vol. 35 no. 4 , 2004, p. 804.

⁵² Peggy Levitt, ‘Social Remittances: migration driven local level form of cultural diffusion’, *International Migration Review*, vol .32 no. 4, 1998, pp.926-948.

thus creating a collective benefit.⁵³ Although these collective remittances form only a small proportion of total remittances that are sent, they are increasingly deemed as increasingly important, especially by international development organizations such as the World Bank.

Acknowledging the growing importance of Diaspora, World Bank noted:

Diasporas serve as important information channels for the flow of information, market intelligence, capital and skills. They may supplement formal channels that rely on market institutions, providing a way for migrants to conduct transactions in an atmosphere of trust. In this way they act to offset information asymmetries and other market failures. Modern Diasporas expedite business transactions by resolving monitoring problems, reducing opportunism and building reputation and ethnic trust based on networking. As migration continues, Diasporas will expand, tying together regions and continents. Even if governments attempt to slow down the process, communications and human relationships will maintain this trend.⁵⁴

Here, the efforts of sending or the home countries and their government policies play an important role. As Caglar argues, the developmental outcomes of Diasporic or transnational migrant engagement in home country will vary according to the policies of the sending countries towards communities abroad and how far they can encourage migrant associations to channel funds home.⁵⁵

Thus, there is a broad consensus emerging on the positive contribution of these transnational diasporic networks as well as diasporic civil society associations on the nature of development process. However, it is the making or formation of these transnational spaces that needs more research. There is a need to adopt a processual approach in understanding the dynamics of transnational communities. The issues and concerns that need to be addressed within this approach relate to the ways in which communities of actors come together and impact development. How are networks constructed; discourses and practices produced and reproduced at various points of

⁵³ McIlwaine, Op. Cit, p. 1270.

⁵⁴ World Bank, *World Development Report 1999/2000: Entering the 21st Century*. Washington, 2000.

⁵⁵ A Caglar, 'Hometown associations, the rescaling of state spatiality and migrant grassroots transnationalism', *Global Networks*, vol. 6 no.1, 2006, pp.1-22.

network; how are collective understandings, identity and norms formed across spatial boundaries and how have the forces of globalization and information and communication technologies, media etc. helped in the formation and sustaining of these networks, along with an assessment of utility of approaching diasporas from a transnational perspective are some of the issues that merit further research.



1.5 Objective and Outline of the Study

Thus, from the preceding discussion it is evident that within the literature on transnationalism, there has been a growing interest in diaspora and diaspora related issues due to the transnational character acquired by these communities. Also, this transnational character of diasporas has led to a shifting of global debate from 'brain drain' to 'brain gain' or 'brain circulation.' This calls for a reassessment of Diaspora's role, especially in bringing about socio economic transformations in their countries of origin. While there has been extensive research on diaspora related issues like cultural hybridization or the role of remittances, there is a need to examine diasporas not merely as cultural actors acting as agents of fusion or economic actors pursuing private gains but also as social actors directly pursuing public good. There is a need to look beyond the purely financial contributions made by these communities and examine their role in creating a transnational public sphere as a consequence of which they are building social capital for development.

However, there is a dearth of serious academic research explaining the complex processes linking this phenomenon with participation, democracy and development. How the Diasporic communities create transnational public spaces and use them as a medium to engage and participate in development and deliberative processes impacting outcomes at the local level is the focus of this study.

This study is about the emergence and effectiveness of Diaspora as a significant actor in public sphere and its impact on the areas where it is embedded. The study applies a

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relatively distinct approach as it looks at the diaspora primarily as a social actor and not merely as an economic actor as most of the studies in this field have previously done. The emergence of Diaspora as a Transnational Public sphere is facilitated by forces of globalization and the recognition of Diaspora as agent of change by the people and state. Therefore, the role of intense global as well local interconnections in building this public space for enhanced participation will be analyzed in detail. This will include an examination of the intra diasporic exchanges. Also; various mediums through which Diaspora communities come together and engage in the development of their regions of origin will be studied. This includes Information and Communication technologies which help to maintain, activate and reproduce participation in the country of origin. The focus will be on the effectiveness of these in linking Diaspora to the home country and in keeping them informed about the activities back home. (*Chapter 2*)

The role of state in facilitating and sustaining these transnational public spheres will also be examined, along with a critical evaluation of the role played by international organizations as well governments of countries of settlement in enhancing the capabilities of these communities. The state policies and various legislations enacted in order to connect with these communities will be critically discussed with the help of examples from various diasporas including Indian. (*Chapter 3*)

At a more local level, firstly activities of Diasporic members in public sphere will be studied, specifically focusing on building of relationships and networks and social capital that is created. Also, the role various NGOs at the village level and other associations (like religious associations), media etc. in engaging Diaspora will be studied.

This study is augmented with the case study of Punjabi Diaspora and rural Punjab. The choice of Punjab is due to the historical depth of their migration and the global extent of their networks. Punjab certainly qualifies as a transnational space with multiple transnational networks linking migrants and Punjabi residents and transforming developmental landscape in the countryside. (*Chapter 4*). The conclusions have been summed up in *Chapter 5*.

1.6 Methodology

The methodology adopted for achieving the objective of the study includes a combination of primary and secondary sources. In order to explore the central theme of the study, an in depth analysis of the available literature on Transnationalism and Diasporas and the impact on socio economic and governance processes has been done. Also, an attempt has been made to develop the argument with the help of case studies of five villages from doaba region of the State of Punjab. These are: Palahi and Athouli (Distt. Kapurthala), Dhesian-Kanha(Distt. Jalandhar), Kharoudi (Distt.Hoshiarpur), and Dhahan Kaleran(Distt. Nawan Shehar) . These villages have been significant sites of out migration for years and the levels of development in these villages as compared to rest of the rural Punjab further make them ideal cases for research. Apart from drawing upon the available studies on some of these villages, the study makes use of information obtained from field visits to the villages and semi structured interviews conducted with some of the officials over a period of two months.

*T*HEORIZING DIASPORA

Within the literature on transnationalism, Diaspora has emerged as a significant framework of analysis. While transnationalism, as discussed in the first chapter, can partly be conceived as a reconstruction of ‘place’ or ‘locality’, Diaspora have become what Tololyan called ‘the exemplary communities of this transnational movement.’¹ The concept has considerably put to question the conventional definitions of nation as unalterable homogeneous entity. As Sahoo and Raghuram have argued, “nations are now urged to reconsider and transcend the old concepts of boundaries and frontiers”² and diasporic thinking has arguably become an important part in this boundary transcending analysis. At the same time, the increasing presence of diasporas have led to the view that under the impact of new global and transnational forces, nation states may not always be the most effective of legitimate units of collective organization.

The meaning of the term Diaspora, however, has not remained constant. James Clifford has appropriately called it a ‘traveling term in changing global conditions.’³ To understand its meaning in the present context, it is imperative to explore the origin and evolution of the concept over the years along with its revival within the literature on Transnationalism as a central idea to understand how global identities are constructed from below. This chapter will argue that diasporas are a distinct variant of international

¹ Kachig Tololyan, ‘The nation-state and its Others: in lieu of a preface’, *Diaspora*, vol. 1 no.1, 1991, pp.3-7.

² Ajay Sahoo and Parvati Raghuram, (eds), *Tracing an Indian Diaspora: Contexts, Memories and Representations*. New Delhi, 2008, p. 2.

³ James Clifford, ‘Diasporas’, *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 9 no.3, 1994, pp.302-338.

migration and that there is emerging a degree of convergence on the utility of studying diaspora from a transnational perspective largely because of its dynamic and fluid character in the present context of globalization. The overall argument is that there is a need to move towards a more comprehensive theorization of diasporas; to one that critically and systematically analyzes the various elements of transnational community formation in the present globalized era.

2.1 Diaspora: A Distinct Migrant Community

Modern day migration is distinguished by its extreme diversification in terms of the many types of contemporary immigrants. These include a wide variety of cross cutting categories and people may shift from one type to another. A possible categorization of international immigrants is given in the table given in the table below:

Table 1: Possible Categories of International Migrants	
Migrants admitted for Education and Training	Foreign students Foreign Trainees Dependents of above
Migrants admitted for Employment	Seasonal Migrant Workers Contract Migrant workers Dependents of the above
Migrants for family reunification	Immediate relatives Marriage
Migrants for settlement	Employment based Family based Ancestry based
Migrants admitted for Humanitarian reasons	Convention Refugees Displaced persons Asylum seekers
Diaspora	Traditional Non Traditional
Undocumented Migrants	
Source: "Definitions of different categories of migrating foreigners", in Economic and Social Affairs, <i>World Population Monitoring 1997: International Migration and Development</i> . New York, 1998, p.7.	

According to Table 1, there are essentially seven categories of international migrants, Diasporas being one of them. The term Diaspora is generally used to describe any population that is considered transnational or deterritorialized. Almost every minority group or migrant community these days tend to consider itself a diaspora but as the categorization above shows, it is obviously not the case. Not all migrants can thus be categorized as Diasporas. What distinguishes diasporas is their on-going or re-awakened attachment and loyalty to their homeland which they have left. As Shuval argues:

Immigrant communities have a certain temporal span and often last up to a third generation after which their self identification as immigrants fades, even though they may retain an ethnic identity. However, a sense of diaspora can occur or reoccur after several generations when the group members are themselves no longer immigrants even though their predecessors were. A sense of diaspora is a feeling that is characterized by shifting periods of latency and activism which occur in response to processes in the three relevant referents: the group itself, the host society and the homeland ⁴

A distinction has also been made between the traditional and the contemporary or the non traditional diaspora due to the evolution of the term over the years. Traditionally, the term diaspora was appropriated and applied to people who have, more or less, been forced out of their homeland as a result of being conquered or persecuted. The connotation of the term was therefore a negative one, linked to displacement, victimization, alienation and loss. The contemporary diasporas, however have come to embrace all communities and ethnic groups that are living in a country or state that is not their ancestral home but have nevertheless been able to develop strong networks of exchange and communication that connect the ancestral home with the new place of settlement. Due to the strong ties to the ancestral home, the contemporary diasporas are more often than not involved as collective actors in lobbying for the issues related to their homeland with the host country governments: the Jewish and Irish lobbies in the United States, for instance. Similarly, Sikh diasporic communities can be found in many countries including the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

The next section will examine the origin and evolution of the concept in detail.

⁴ Judith Shuval, 'Diaspora Migration: Definitional Ambiguities and a Theoretical Paradigm' in Sahoo, A.K. and Maharaj, B.(eds), *Sociology of Diaspora :A Reader Vol. 1* , Jaipur, 2007, p.33.

2.2 Origin and Evolution of the Concept

The term 'Diaspora' is derived from the Greek word *diaspeirein* which means 'dispersal or scattering of seeds.' As explained by Vertovec, "Diaspora was at one time a concept referring almost exclusively to the experience of Jews, invoking their traumatic exile from a historical homeland and dispersal throughout many lands."⁵ The term derives its meaning from the dispersion of Jews from Palestine following the Babylonian conquest of the Judean kingdom in the 6th century B.C. Its first appearance is believed by scholars, to be in the Greek translation of the book Deuteronomy in the Old Testament ("thou shalt be a diaspora in all kingdoms of the earth") referring to the situation of the Jewish people.⁶ Many early scholars on Diaspora have adopted this human dispersal approach to define Diaspora. Along with Jews, with the earlier experience of Greek and Armenian dispersion as reference, connotations of Diaspora were usually rather negative and ominous and were associated with forced displacement, victimization, alienation and loss. Cohen describes how Diaspora signified 'a collective trauma, a banishment where one dreamed of home but lived in exile.'⁷ Cohen further distinguishes between victim, trade, labor, imperial and cultural Diasporas, emphasizing the different factors shaping them. Agreeing with Cohen's classification, Tololayn adds that 'the term that once described Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrants, expatriates, refugees, guest workers, exile community, ethnic minority etc.'⁸ Migrants have also been studied as asylum seekers, displaced population, 'folk devils' or threats to the security and prosperity of host societies, to name but a few attributions. While the narratives of uprooting and displacement continue to be the central themes in contemporary notions of Diaspora, the current usage of the term conveys much more. It is only relatively recently, that the term Diaspora is being systematically used in academic and policy discourses. This indicates the potential of the concept to serve as a theoretical tool for the

⁵ Steven Vertovec, 'Three Meanings of Diaspora Exemplified among South Asian Religions', *Diaspora: Journal of Transnational Affairs*, vol. 6 no. 3, 1997, pp. 277-299.

⁶ Gabriel Scheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*, Cambridge, 2003.

⁷ Robin Cohen, *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*. London, 1997.

⁸ Kachig Tololyan, 'The nation-state and its others: in lieu of a preface', *Diaspora*, vol. 1 no.1,1991, pp. 3-7.

advancement of qualitatively different perspectives and outlooks in the study of human migration.

2.3 The Concept Revisited

The renewed meaning of Diaspora and the significance of the study are the outcome of a few systematic attempts to define the field and suggest ways of approaching the study of diasporic phenomenon. One of the earliest and most systematic efforts to delineate the concept is that of William Safran. He argues that the concept of diaspora is linked to those communities that share some or all of the following characteristics⁹:

- The original community has spread from a homeland to two or more countries; they are bound from their disparate geographical locations by a common vision, memory or myth about their homelands;
- They have a belief that they will never be accepted by their host societies and therefore develop their autonomous cultural and social needs;
- They or their descendants will return to the homeland should the conditions prove favourable;
- They should continue to maintain support for homeland and therefore the community consciousness and solidarity enables them to continue these activities.

Adding to the above list of characteristics, Cohen proposes four other elements to expand the definition of diaspora and include a broader range of phenomenon. According to him a definition of diaspora needs to¹⁰:

- be able to include those groups that scatter voluntarily or as a result of fleeing aggression, persecution or extreme hardship;
- take into account the necessity for a sufficient time period before any community can be described as a diaspora. According to Cohen, there should be indications of the community's strong links to the past that thwart assimilation in the present as well as the future;

⁹ William Safran, *Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return*. Cambridge, 1991, p.83.

¹⁰ Cohen, *Global Diaspora...*, Op. Cit., p. 24.

- recognize more positive aspects of diasporic communities. For instance, the tension between ethnic, national and transnational identities can lead to creative formulations;
- acknowledge that diasporic communities not only form a collective identity in the place of settlement or with their homeland , but also share a common identity with members of the same ethnic communities in other countries.

In referring to modern diaspora, Sheffer has proposed a simple definition:

Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin- their homelands.¹¹

For others like Bruneau, migration can be defined as producing a ‘diaspora’ if four conditions are met : first, an ethnic consciousness; second, an active associative life; third, contacts with the land of origin in various form, real or imaginary; fourth there should be relations with other groups of the same ethnic origin spread over the world.¹²

This is best captured by Judith Shuval:

A diaspora is a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group identity, longings, dreams, allegorical and virtual elements all of which play an important role in establishing a diaspora reality. At a given moment in time, the sense of connection to a homeland must be strong enough to resist forgetting, assimilating or distancing.¹³

Another definition by Sokefeld highlights the significance of mobilization process in the formations of Diasporic communities, who defined Diaspora as intersecting sets of imagined transnational communities.

The assumption of a shared identity that unites people living dispersed in transnational space thereby becomes the central defining feature of diasporas. Rejecting ideas of migrants’ natural rootedness and belonging

¹¹ Gabriel Sheffer, (ed.), *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, New York, 1986, p.14.

¹² M. Bruneau, ‘Espaces et Territoires de Diasporas’, *L’Espace Geographique*, vol. 1,1994, pp.5-18.

¹³ Shuval, *Diaspora Migration...*, Op. Cit. p.43.

to places of origin, I argue that diaspora identity and the imagination of a diaspora community is also an outcome of mobilization processes. The development of diaspora identity is not simply a natural and inevitable result of migration but a historical contingency that frequently develops out of mobilization in response to specific critical events. Diaspora is thus firmly historicized. It is not an issue of naturally felt roots but of specific political circumstances that suggest the mobilization of a transnational imagined community. The focus on mobilization in the formation of diasporas effectively counters essentializing the concepts of diasporas.¹⁴

Thus, the various attempts to redefine and reinvent the concept have clearly taken the debate forward by emphasizing not only the transnational character of Diasporas but also by pointing out their “trans-nationality” in the production of creative tensions and synthesis. Diasporas are now no more seen primarily as a sub-category of an ethnic group or a nation. In the new context of transnationalism and global networking, the usage of the term carries with it connotations relating to the transnational character of diasporas and the phenomenon surrounding them. The diaspora discourse is characterized by a “multiplicity of relations not only between diasporic communities and their homeland in a binary context but also because of the on-going, lateral relations among diaspora communities located in different sites within nations and in different states.”¹⁵ It also intimates the existence of a closer relationship of contemporary diasporic conditions with the highly diverse and complex processes, which we identify as globalization. There is a shift from ‘mobility’ to ‘connectivity’ or in other words, ‘an acknowledgement of the importance, even centrality, of the processes of communication and exchange.’¹⁶

2.4 Theorizing Diaspora: A Transnational Perspective

Steven Vertovec has rightly pointed out that Diaspora is an over used but an under theorized term. Although it is premature to argue that a widely acceptable theoretical

¹⁴ M. Sokefeld, ‘Mobilizing in Transnational Space: A Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora’, *Global Networks*, vol. 6 no. 3, 2006, p.280.

¹⁵ Shuval, *Diaspora Migration...*, Op. Cit., p.36.

¹⁶ Roza Tsagarousianau, ‘Reevaluating ‘Diaspora’: Connectivity, Communication and Imagination in a Globalized World’ in Sahoo and Maharaj, Op. Cit., p.109.

framework for study of diaspora is in place, but the debate unfolding over the past decade has contributed to some convergence on the issue.

The two prominent theoretical frameworks used to study diasporas are ethnicity and migration. While the first focuses on ethnocentric definitions of diaspora, the second concerns largely with the causes of migration or displacement. However, in the present context of globalization, there is emerging a consensus over a clear need and advantage to move away from the ethnic or migration theories and towards a transnational perspective.

As argued by Tsagarousianou, 'diasporic identity' is not the same as 'ethnic identity' -

not all dispersed populations can automatically and uncritically be identified as diasporas because they share a common ethnic ancestry and identity. It is their readiness and willingness to engage themselves with the building of a transnational imagination and connection that constitutes the threshold from ethnic to diasporic identification.¹⁷

Moreover, the emphasis on the constitutive role of ethnic origins (e.g. religion, language, race) can often contribute to lack of attention to the potentialities of diasporas i.e. the various creative possibilities opened by the activities of diasporas in both local and transnational contexts. Safran rightly argues that in addition to the centrality attributed to the formative character of the common experiences of loss and displacement, it is important not to lose sight of the equal significance of the ability of diasporas to construct and negotiate their identities, everyday life and transnational activities.¹⁸ On similar lines, Cohen has also pointed out the 'more positive' (as opposed to nostalgic) aspects of diasporic communities by acknowledging that diasporic communities not only form a collective identity in their place of settlement or with their homeland, but also share a common identity with members of same ethnic communities in other countries.¹⁹ Therefore, instead of the uncritical ethnocentric or ethnic definitions of diasporas, we

¹⁷ Ibid., p.111.

¹⁸ William Safran, *Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return*, Cambridge, 1991, p. 89.

¹⁹ Cohen, *Global Diasporas...*, Op. Cit., p.32.

should be focusing more on the complex processes of negotiation that often transcend the limitations of 'ethnicity'.

The transnational approach to studying diasporas is more useful and relevant than the traditional migration systems approach as well. As argued by Mahler:

whereas most traditional research on international migration focuses on migrants' adaptation to their new society and therefore is highly myopic vis-a vis individual countries and their interests, the transnational perspective situates migration in broader arenas where it can be bridged conceptually and analytically to other phenomenon.²⁰

Transnational migration not only includes aspects of international migration but also its aftermath in emigration countries. It goes beyond and across nation states, "unlike the migration systems- predominantly a macro level approach which does not conceptualize the respective civil societies."²¹

In contrast to the migration systems theory, the transnational approach brings migrants 'back in' as actors in their own right. There is thus a possibility of linking up with other transnational phenomenon such as transnational social movements and nongovernmental 'advocacy coalitions'.²²

Last but not the least, going beyond the traditional migration theories which focus mainly on the causes of migration and the migration process itself, the transnational approach explicitly considers the repercussions for politics, policy and local governance outcomes in emigration as well as immigration countries.

²⁰ Mahler, Op. Cit., p. 214.

²¹ Thomas Faist, 'The Transnational Turn: Migration and Politics' in Sahoo and Maharaj, Op. Cit., p.244.

²² Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, (eds), *Activists Beyond Borders. Transnational Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Ithaca, 1998.

2.5 Diaspora formations in a globalized world

It is important to locate the Diasporic phenomenon within the context of globalization processes of the last few decades, which have intensified in the recent times due to the vastly improved transportation and communication technologies. The impact of transnational migration differs from, but must be understood within the context of, the heightened globalization in which it is embedded. ‘Changes prompted by migration and globalization mutually reinforce one another.’²³ It has been argued that the links between globalization and the rise of diasporas are not necessarily direct, however, globalization has conferred disproportionate advantages upon Diasporas, enhancing their practical, economic and affective roles and showing them to be particularly adaptive forms of social organization.

Diasporas are emerging as key players in the globalization process. Diasporic communal networks are sets of planetary linkages that form a third tier of interregional connections in addition to those maintained by governments and transnational organizations. Joel Kotkin calls them ‘global tribes’ that will “increasingly shape the economic destiny of mankind.”²⁴ Taking this view to its extreme, Arjun Appadurai prematurely declares the ‘imminent end of nation state’ and considers the ‘transnations of diasporic communities’ to be the significant aspects of the globalization processes.²⁵ Interestingly, these transnational communities are uniquely at once the products and catalysts for the contemporary globalization process. In words of Cohen, “Globalization and Diasporisation are separate phenomena with no necessary causal connections but they go together extraordinarily well.”²⁶

Globalization is expressed in world wide financial, economic, technological and ecological interdependence in which goods, capital, knowledge, culture and fashions flow across territorial boundaries. Over the past few decades, the forces of globalization

²³ Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers*, Berkeley, 2001, p. 14.

²⁴ Joel Kotkin, *Tribes: How Race Religion and Identity determine success in New Global Economy*, New York, 1992, p.14.

²⁵ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, 1996.

²⁶ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, London, 1997.

have triggered a dramatic proliferation in communication media which have created an increasingly interconnected world. These processes have been gaining momentum and sophistication and are likely to continue in this direction in future. The modes of communication include written and oral media, electronic media including the internet, as well as relatively cheap means of transportation to all corners of the globe.

Saskia Sassen further indicates that economic links fostered by globalization, ranging from off shoring of production, foreign investment by countries of north in those situated in the South and the power of multinationals in the consumer markets of developing states has often resulted in increased mass movement of people.²⁷. Movement of people of various origins to different parts of the world have created diasporas that are layered by periods of migration, the extent of integration into the receiving societies and the maintenance of links with the land of origin as well as other parts of the transnational group. Migration arguably has become the most ubiquitous form of globalization. The intensification of the forces of global media and communication has led to a deeper and wider form of transnational bonding among communities. The advent of a complex web of interconnectedness, (aided by international telephone and cell phone linkages, satellite television and fax machines, computerization and the improvement in transportation technologies) has made it possible for international migrants to develop multiple loyalties and identities. Communication and transportation advances have made it easier for diasporic and other migrant communities to keep in touch with those in the ancestral homeland or in other countries where members from those ethnic communities may be found. Electronic banking has facilitated the process of migrant remittances from the host countries to the homeland. Transnationalization of production and capital has allowed for stronger economic relations between diasporic communities and their countries of origin.²⁸

²⁷ Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization*, New York, 1996.

²⁸ Knight, W. Andy, 'Conceptualizing Transnational Community Formation: Migrants, Sojourners and Diasporas in a Globalized Era' in Sahoo and Maharaj, Op. Cit., pp. 267-297.

Tsagarousianou rightly observes that:

New technologies and faster communications in the present age of globalization, contrasted to the long and precarious journeys of emigration and the slow and fragile communications among earlier migrants are therefore just one of the factors that have clearly shaped what we understand as diasporic experience in the modern times.²⁹

The movement of people, characteristic of late modern migration, is complemented by and involves the circulation of money, technology, goods, information, ideas and lifestyles etc., what Appadurai describes with shorthand terms –‘mediascapes, ideoscapes, financescapes, technoscapes and ethnoscapescapes.’³⁰ In this new conceptual setting, diaspora can refer to constellations of economic, technological, cultural and ideological communication flows and networks. This way of thinking about diasporas allows us to think of a multitude of phenomena and processes in a much more holistic and inclusive way.

This relationship between diasporas and globalization is further enhanced by the growing transnationalization of media. As argued earlier, diasporic communities are constantly engaged in the processes of reinventing, reawakening and restructuring which effectively renders media technologies and diasporic media crucial factors in the reproduction and transformation of diasporic identities. Many diasporas have developed a range of media channels to bind members and maintain connections with their homeland. Appadurai, for instance, suggests that as electronic media “increasingly links producers and audiences across national boundaries and as these audiences themselves start new conversations between those who move and those who stay, we find a number of diasporic public spheres.”³¹ Globalization has changed the face of media, especially after 1970s and 80s, taking it from national to transnational or global level, making it less state centric and more plural (with the rise of ethnic media). All this has facilitated diasporas who use this new form of media for their empowerment, thereby maintaining,

²⁹ Tsagarousianou, *Op. Cit.*, p.111.

³⁰ Appadurai, *Modernity...*, *Op. Cit.*, p.52.

³¹ *Ibid.*

sustaining and sometimes constructing communities, often in a virtual space, surpassing geographical limits and boundaries.

2.5.1 Transnational Media and Community Formation among Diasporas

Media and communication channels have been quite instrumental in creating new, usually wider communities, partly due to the technological transitions within the media and partly due to a shift in the regulatory policies related to it. It is important to identify the role of the new transnational and pluralistic media in construction of or restructuring and maintaining the already established but somehow fragile communities – Diasporas.

‘Diasporic Media’ is a term that refers to a considerably diverse array of organizations, practices and settings where diasporic narratives are constructed. But regardless of this diversity and heterogeneity, it can be argued that the various media, information and communication technologies that are utilized by the diasporas play an important role not only in the articulation of diasporic identities in the strict sense, but also in providing a sense of ‘contemporaneity and simultaneity’. “Diasporic media not only enable their audiences to ‘be in two places at one’ but effectively give them the opportunity of producing new spaces where remote localities and their experiences come together and become synchronized.”³²

Diasporas as imagined communities: A fundamental feature of all forms of community, whether large or small, mediated across time space distances or situated in specific locales, is their symbolically constructed character. Verhulst defines them as ‘fictional realities’ – things that are experienced as real and appear to have an objective existence but which are actually created by mind through the workings of an ‘imaginative geography’.³³ Benedict Anderson in his “*Imagined Communities*” suggested that what constituted members of a nation was in part a creation of print technology (a form of media). This can be extended to other medias like the electronic and online media. As

³² Tsagarousianau, Op. Cit., p.113.

³³ Verhulst, Op. Cit., p.31.

described by Anderson, “the emergence of new nationalisms results from a process of re-imagination conditioned by drastic transformations in the conscience and media with a modern framework”³⁴

For a sense of community to emerge, writes Rinnawi, people must see themselves as groups who live ‘parallel’ to other groups where they share language, religion, customs, values, history and so forth. Most people who belong to these groups will never know, meet or even really understand the people in their parallel groups, but they imagine that they are a community with a deep horizontal comradeship.³⁵ The transnational media facilitates this imagined community first put forth and described by Anderson.

As Mandaville points out,

Diasporic media can and should be understood as much more than simply a means by which information of interest to a given community can be exchanged, or a means for communicating images of that community to the wider society. Indeed we need to understand these media as spaces of communication in which the identity, meaning and boundaries of diasporic community are continually constructed, debated and re-imagined.³⁶

The new global, transnational and plural form of media provides a sense of belonging for people to a community, because they all participate in the same socio ritual of mass media, largely made possible by transnationalization of media. However, in the case of Diaspora, media particularly electronic media is not concerned merely with construction of new identities but also to prevent the death of existing ones. In other words, Diasporic communications via electronic media enable the existence of re-imagined communities.

The next two sections will examine the significance of electronic media, particularly the TV broadcasting and Online Media, to shape Diasporic communities.

³⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1983.

³⁵ Khalil Rinnawi, ‘The Internet and the Arab World as a Virtual Public Sphere.’, 2002, Accessed at www.cmsprod.bgu.ac.il/NR...../Rinnawi.pdf

³⁶ P. Mandaville. ‘Re-imagining Islam in Diaspora : The Politics of Mediated Community’, *Gazette*, vol. 63 no.2, 2001, pp.169-183.

2.5.1.1 Television Broadcasting

A major development due to globalization was the deregulation of media post nineties and development of advanced media technologies where the state no longer has the ability to control media content. Proliferation of different forms of media led to the emergence of what is known as ethnic media. Ethnic media serves two purposes – to contribute to ethnic cohesion and cultural maintenance as well as help members of different communities to integrate with each other.

While earlier members of Diasporic groups had to rely on limited media density like weekly newspapers, magazines, state run news and programme, delayed movie release, etc. to meet the information and entertainment needs of their communities, the emergence of ethnic media in the period ensuing deregulation, trade liberalization and technological innovation has enabled the dispersed diasporic communities to maintain active links among their far flung members. Previously, with state controlled media, the particular nation state emphasized its own agenda, but the new ethnic media, seeking their larger and dispersed audience, are no longer focusing on any particular national issue but on transnational images, stories and messages that would appeal to a general de-territorialized diasporic audience rather than a national one. Thus, a shared identity emerges which is largely articulated through media.

Ethnic media (like the Asian, Arab, Hispanic, Chinese, etc.) have frequently been at the leading edge of technology adoption due to particular challenges they face in reaching their audience. The relatively widely scattered nature of communities that they serve has encouraged them to seek out the most efficient and cost effective means of communication. Technologies that allow for narrowcasting to target specific audiences rather than those that provide means for communication have generally been favored.

Karim explains how Digital Broadcasting Satellite systems have emerged as a significant invention in this regard. The arrival of Ku band satellites and digital compression technology has enabled a vast increase in the number of television channels that can be beamed over large distances directly to residential sites equipped

with pizza-sized satellite dishes.³⁷ Whereas developing as well as developed countries have expressed fears that digital broadcasting satellites (DBS) would erode their sovereignty by transmitting foreign programming to their populations in an unregulated manner, this technology has provided remarkable opportunities for diasporic communities. Ethnic broadcasters, previously having limited access to space on the electromagnetic spectrum in the Northern countries are finding much greater options opening up for them through DBS. Diasporic programming using this technology has grown exponentially in the last few years, well ahead of many mainstream broadcasters. Some of the examples include: Asian Television Network, Telelatino (Spanish and Italian), Nile TV, Fairchild TV(Chinese) and ART (Arabic).³⁸

Apart from the above mentioned DBS television channels offered by global conglomerates like Rupert Murdoch's Star TV which beams programmes to several Asian countries, there have emerged several Diasporic DBS based networks. The Chinese TV network headquartered in HongKong serves over one billion global Chinese viewers. India's state run network Doordarshan has taken its international broadcasting services to more than 40 countries. In Canada and US, Doordarshan's programming is carried by the Asian Television Network of South Asian Network. This network which grew out of an ethnic broadcaster began disseminating locally produced and imported content in 1997 in several Indian languages to Canadian and US audiences.³⁹

2.5.1.2 Internet and Community Formation

Internet is a relatively new but a significant catalyst in the globalization process. Through the internet, an individual or a small group can reach the whole world and that too with a little effort and less time. Once online, Internet users have access to thousands of information providers. Worldwide, an estimated 581 million people were online by 2002, more than one third of whom lived outside North America and Europe. The Internet

³⁷ Karim H. Karim, 'From Ethnic Media to Global Media: Transnational Communication Networks among Diasporic Communities', *Working Paper of the ESRC Transnational Communities Programme*, www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk, 1998, p. 9.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

broadcasters don't have to invest in government sanctioned licenses and generally have no limits on their speech. In the words of Benjamin Compaine, "Internet has leveled the playing field."⁴⁰ This is so because it is a relatively low cost conduit for all content providers.

The use of Internet as infrastructure for community interaction has caught the attention of many in the recent past. It has been quite instrumental in the creation of so called Virtual Communities. Various individuals and groups are making extensive use of online services like the internet, Usenet, Listserv and the World Wide Web. These worldwide networks are allowing for relatively easy connections for members of communities residing in various continents. As opposed to the broadcast model of communication which is linear, hierarchical and capital intensive, online media allow easier access and are nonlinear, largely non hierarchical and relatively cheap. According to Steffan Verhulst, this online media has helped create a "cyberspace" where users electronically reconstitute the relationship, identities and communities.⁴¹

Transnational communities of immigrants constitute an important example of traditional communities that have recently started to use this online media of Internet for community interaction. These transnational communities called Diaspora are a dispersed group of individuals from the same nation who maintain a sense of togetherness across geographical borders. Internet is shaping the ability of these dispersed groups to create, preserve and extend their sense of community in virtual spaces. By participating in online channels of communication these geographically dispersed groups around the globe nurture their social ties and their interests concerning life abroad and their home country. Internet constitutes an alternative medium through which this sense of community can be reinforced through space and time.

The ability to exchange messages with individuals on the other side of the planet and to have access to community information almost instantaneously changes the dynamics of

⁴⁰ Benjamin Compaine, 'Global Media', *Foreign Policy*, December, 2001, pp.20-24.

⁴¹ Steffan Verhulst, 'Diasporic and Transnational Communication: Technologies, Policies and Regulation', *The Public*, vol. 6 no.1,1991, p. 29.

diaspora, allowing for qualitatively and quantitatively enhanced linkages. As the number of languages, scripts and translation capabilities of the online software grows, an increasing number of non English speakers are drawn to the online medium. Diasporic websites are already creating global directories of individuals, communities, institutions and businesses owned by members of diaspora. For example, some sites have hypertext links to sites of alumni associations etc.

The availability of online versions of newspapers from the countries of origin further enhances intercontinental connections. Global online technologies also offer some unique advantages to diasporic groups. For instance a worldwide registry would be extremely useful for the medical purposes of locating matches for human marrow donors who are generally limited to one's own ethnic group. Besides, many websites catering to transnational communities have chat rooms where users can carry out a discussion by posting messages. Usenet allows for ongoing discussions between individuals with common origins in newsgroups like soc.culture.pakistan or soc.culture.punjab.⁴²

These communities which bond through online media and communication tools have been termed by Rheingold as 'Virtual Communities'⁴³. Referring to this virtual space created by internet, Ananda Mitra writes,

When one encounters a message that refers back to a college in India there is an effort to find, in the virtual community, familiar relationships that have been severed by the process of geographic movement but can now be re established in the virtual space of the internet.⁴⁴

According to Karim, this is not Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" since it is extra national, but it is nevertheless imagined. The community identity that emerges is not the old one, but one that is a hybrid of past alliances and the re-establishment of relations through the Internet.

⁴² Karim, Op. Cit., p. 13.

⁴³ Rheingold Howard, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading and the Electronic Frontier*, Reading Mass, 1993.

⁴⁴ Ananda Mitra, 'Virtual Commonality: Looking for India on the Internet', in Steven G. Jones, (ed.), *Virtual Culture: Identity & Communication in Cybersociety*, London, 1997, p. 63.

From the preceding discussion, it can be argued that any displaced or dispersed population cannot automatically be identified as a diaspora. The crucial element that makes the concept meaningful and legitimate to use is their self mobilization around their awareness of themselves as a diaspora. In other words, it is their ability to imagine themselves as such, to imagine and construct the relevant transnational linkages and to construct the appropriate discourses. Processes of globalization, diasporic media together with a host of other diasporic cultural, political and economic processes can transform diasporas from little more than aggregates of migrants into active and vibrant diasporic networks. The discussion also leads us to argue that ‘ethnicity’, ‘mobility’ and ‘displacement’ are not adequate as parameters to allow us to make sense of the complex and multidirectional diasporic phenomenon. Instead diasporas should be seen as depending not so much on displacement but on connectivity or on the complex nexus of linkages that contemporary transnational dynamics make possible and sustain.

It is through these transnational processes that diasporas come together as communities constituting new spaces for discussion and activity, known as the transnational public spheres. The emergence and spread of these spheres, especially among Indian diasporic communities, and their diverse impact on development and governance outcomes in the home countries suggests a need to examine these transnational communities and the processes of collective action that they are involved in, processes that have long term implications for local change. At the same time it is important to understand the role of other developmental actors, particularly the state, in strengthening the transnational public spheres by establishing, maintaining and building links with diasporas and incorporating them within the development strategies at various levels.

The next chapter will discuss, with the help of examples from various countries, how these by and large self mobilized diasporic communities can be effectively harnessed by constructively engaging with them.

*H*ARNESSING DIASPORAS: ROLE OF THE STATE

There is emerging a broad consensus on the significance of transnational communities like the diaspora and their contribution to development thinking and financing in the countries of origin. Both remittances as well as the mobilization of material goods, know how and networks to the benefit of home countries have a profound impact on levels of development in developing countries worldwide. On their own initiative, Diasporas have been able to collectively mobilize financial, human and social capital to set up and implement developmental projects in their countries of origin. The challenge however is to maximize the beneficial impacts of such development oriented diaspora. As identified earlier, sustaining the transnational linkages that can foster development poses a long term challenge. This calls for a rethinking of approach towards diaspora to address these and other related challenges. The underlying premise of this approach should be recognition of the fact that transnational communities like the diaspora can constitute a valuable resource for development in countries of origin but this positive impact is a potential rather than an automatic mechanism. “The fundamental question is not whether diaspora leads to certain types of development, but how different policy environments explain why diaspora has more positive development outcomes in some cases and less positive in others.”¹

A right kind of policy environment requires action at all levels — from global to local — to fully enable diaspora participation as partners in local development process. As Hein

¹ Hein de Haas, ‘Engaging Diasporas : How government and development agencies can support diaspora involvement in countries of origin’, *A Study for Oxfam Novib*, 2006, www.imi.ox.ac.uk, p.13.

de Hass rightly argues, “it is important to mobilize development actors, not diasporas. Most diasporas are already mobilized. Rather than mobilizing diasporas, development actors from global to local level should be mobilized for engaging with diaspora for development cooperation.”² This brings into focus the role of governments in harnessing this important resource by fostering an enabling environment for them to engage constructively. Thus, the concern of this chapter is : how local and national governments, both of the host countries and the countries of origin as well as international multilateral agencies can forge and sustain a mutually beneficial partnership with diaspora to increase the development impact of their economic, social and other activities concerning the country of origin. The role of these three shall be examined using examples of policies and programs of governments of countries that have successfully leveraged their diaspora, albeit through different ways. These will include China, Mexico, Philippines, Africa and of course, India.

3.1. Role of Multilateral Agencies

With the beginning of 21st century, the issue of diaspora and development has been increasingly gaining attention of organizations such as United Nations, European Union, World Bank, International Monetary Fund as well as other international organizations like the International Labour Organization and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In the recent past, these organizations have come up with policies and practices with regard to migration management, diasporas and their role in development cooperation. The most significant contribution of these organizations, apart from the projects and programs carried out with their assistance is the rich amount of empirical studies conducted by them which have contributed to the debate on the potential role of diasporas in development processes in home countries.

This renewed enthusiasm with regard to diasporas and their impact in development field was preceded by a period of pessimism and skepticism regarding the entire issue of

² Ibid.

migration and development. Diasporas were largely out of sight in development field from 1960s till about early 1990s. A growing body research on migration and development, conducted over 1980s and 1990s under the influence of the new economics of labour migration (NELM), however, challenged the dominant pessimistic views on migration impacts. Based on substantial evidence pointing to the diverse nature of migration impacts, NELM offered a more subtle view, in which both negative and positive development responses were possible, depending on the degree to which sending countries and regions provided attractive environments in which to invest and to engage.³

Against the background of a long pessimism and near neglect, the sudden rediscovery of the migration and development issue and the rapid shift from pessimistic to optimistic view on diaspora and development among multilateral organizations, governments and development agencies in the first decade of 21st century is a remarkable phenomenon.⁴ This renewed interest, according to Haas, has been instigated by a strong and unexpected increase in remittances, especially when it is being claimed that remittances are close to tripling the value of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided to low income countries, and that they comprise the second largest source of external funding for developing countries after Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).⁵ As a result, various multilateral agencies and inter-governmental bodies have recently attempted to formulate policies and to develop concrete actions so as to maximize the development contribution of migration through the active involvement of diasporic communities.

3.1.1 Multilateral Financial Institutions

Multilateral institutions like the World Bank are constantly seeking to influence issues of governance, capacity building and development; all areas that the Diaspora also focus upon. By developing partnerships with such institutions and organizations, the work can

³ Edward J. Taylor, 'The New Economics of Labour Migration and the Role of Remittances in Migration Process', *International Migration*, vol. 37 no.1, 1999, pp. 63-88.

⁴ Devesh Kapur, 'Remittances: The New Development Mantra', Paper prepared for the G-24 Technical Group Meeting, 2003, Accessed at <http://www.unctad.org/docs>.

⁵ Haas, Op. Cit., p.12.

be made a lot easier and the benefits more readily realized. Thomas Fontaine has identified an important area in which multilateral institutions can help support diaspora development which is the “designing of policies to ensure that the potential welfare gains from the Diaspora are not wasted. Successful design of such policies requires a careful analysis of migration patterns and detailed information , which can come through much research and analysis, and help inform policy decision making.”⁶

3.1.1.1 World Bank

Until 2003, migration and development was a relatively minor issue for the World Bank. This changed with the publication of the highly influential Global Development Finance Report by the World Bank in 2003. The report raised global awareness of the developmental relevance of migration, stressing the relative importance of workers’ remittances as a source of development finance in developing countries. In October of the same year, the World Bank collaborated with Department for International Development of the United Kingdom to organize a major conference on migrant remittances in London. The meeting, attended by 100 participants from 42 countries, signified a definite breakthrough of the migration issue on the global development cooperation agenda. It drew attention to soaring remittances and their developmental role, and reflected the priority given to the issue by global developmental actors.⁷ This was a kick off of a major series of World Bank empirical studies and publications analyzing remittances, poverty and development issues. Haas provides a brief summary of these reports and their findings. The 2004 Global Development Finance Report cited a World Bank study showing that at the individual level, remittances augment the income and reduce the poverty of the recipients. It also argued that at the macro level, remittances are believed to have a favourable effect on growth to the extent that they are used to finance education

⁶ Thomson Fontaine, ‘ How can Multilateral Financial Institutions Support Diaspora Development : A New Perspective’, Presentation made to the UN Caribbean Diaspora Experts’ Meeting at UN Secretariat in New York, Accessed at www.thedominican.net/diasp.pdf , 2005, p.3.

⁷ Haas, Op. Cit., p. 15.

and health expenses. Its main policy recommendation focused on reducing remittance transaction costs through stimulating better access to banking services for migrant workers in remittance-source countries and households in recipient countries; harmonization of the financial infrastructure supporting remittances; and a better investment climate in the remittance receiving country (for example, through removal of foreign exchange restrictions). Another major World Bank study completed in 2005, entitled *International Migration, Remittances and the Brain Drain*, suggested, among other things, that both internal and international remittances reduce the level, depth and severity of poverty in countries of origin. On similar lines, the World Bank's 'Global Economic Prospects 2006: *Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration*' analyzed the gains and losses associated with international migration and policies to improve the developmental impact of migration, with particular attention to remittances. It showed that international migration generates significant economic gains for the migrants, the countries of origin and the countries of destination and that the benefits to the countries of origin are especially large in case of low-skilled migration.

In the same vein as the World Bank, the IMF has also been conducting remittance studies over the past few years. But as Haas has rightly observed:

Although rich in content and scope, the IMF and World Bank studies and policy documents tend to focus strongly on the remittance dimensions, and pay relatively little attention to non-monetary dimensions of the migration and development nexus. Although these institutions do engage in the 'brain drain vs. brain gain' debate, this does not comprise the often collective contribution of that migrants can make to development in sending countries by less tangible contributions to democratization, civil society and knowledge transfer.⁸

3.1.1.2 European Investment Bank (EIB)

The European Investment Bank, responsible outside the European Union for implementing the financial components of agreements concluded under European

⁸ Ibid.

development aid and cooperation policies, commissioned a study on improving the efficiency of workers' remittances from the EU to eight Mediterranean partner countries (Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria). The study, published in 2006, concluded that the methods of transfer used are extremely expensive for those sending the money and prevent the funds from being put to good use to finance productive investments.

Apart from recommending reduction in transaction costs through better services, encouraging the use of banking systems through offering banking services specifically targeted at diasporas, remittance-tailored bank accounts and investment funds; the report also recommends the pooling of remittance resources to finance infrastructure projects as well as entrepreneurial activities and productive investments in countries of origin which could also be stimulated by matching government or donor funds. The report further recommends promoting the transfer of knowledge and know how of migrants and support for diaspora organizations wishing to stimulate development activities in countries of origin.⁹

3.1.1.3 Asian Development Bank (ADB)

The Asian Development Bank in 2003 funded a case study on the Philippines remittance industry and has extended the study to review overseas remittance flows among Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and China. The aim of these studies is to identify factors in the policy and institutional framework that impact these flows. In 2005, ADB concluded an important study the goal of which was to evaluate and examine increased use of associations of highly skilled expatriate nationals in transfer of knowledge and capacity development and improved awareness among developing member countries of the benefits of such practices. The study came up with a detailed review of such knowledge transfer experiences in Afghanistan, People's Republic of China and Philippines to promote more extensive applications in these and other

⁹ Ibid.

developing member countries, and to explore innovative means of using these networks for knowledge transfer.¹⁰

3.1.2 Other Agencies

3.1.2.1 UNDP and TOKTEN

Back in 1977, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) Programme, which is still in force.¹¹ It is probably the longest standing and most successful programme aimed at a transfer of competencies without being linked to permanent return.

Currently running in 35 developing countries, the TOKTEN programme was created against the background of the serious concerns that came up in the 1970s about the brain drain.¹² In many ways, it was a ‘brain circulation’ programme which sought to bring the knowledge, expertise and experience of qualified expatriates back to their country of origin through a reverse transfer of technology and knowledge through short-term consultancy missions. “Between 1977 and 1997 TOKTEN placed about 5000 volunteers on assignments in 49 developing countries. TOKTEN participants work with public or private institutions, including universities or NGOs, in the fields ranging from agriculture and manufacturing to health, law, management and technology.”¹³

There are numerous examples of successful TOKTEN programs in various countries. For instance, more than 400 Palestinian expatriate professionals have temporarily served in senior advisory and planning positions in various Palestinian Authority ministries, NGOs and private sector institutions.¹⁴ In Mali, a joint TOKTEN-UNESCO program brought in

¹⁰ Clay Wescott and Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, (eds.), *Converting Migration Drains into Gains: Harnessing the Resources of Overseas Professionals*, Manila: Asian Development Bank, Draft manuscript accessed at www.adb.org/Documents/Events/2006/.../Diaspora-Draft.pdf , 2006, p.30.

¹¹ <http://www.tokten.org/> , the official website of TOKTEN.

¹² Van Hear et al., Op. Cit., p.28.

¹³ Kathleen Newland, and Erin Patrick , *Beyond Remittances: The Role of Diaspora in Poverty Reduction in their Countries of Origin*, A Scoping Study by the Migration Policy Institute for the Department of International Development, 2004, Accessed at http://www.livelihoods.org/hot_topics/docs/MPIDiaspora.doc .

¹⁴ <http://www.tokten.org/> , the official website of TOKTEN.

Malian visiting professors from Europe, North America and Africa to fill urgent teaching and research needs at the University of Mali. A TOKTEN program in Bosnia – Herzegovina, implemented jointly with IOM, has received applications from Bosnian nationals living across the world. The selected candidates can return for a period of up to 2 months to work in the public and private sectors. After completing their consultancies, participants can continue to provide their expertise online.¹⁵

Applicant information is entered into the TOKTEN database and a steering Committee consisting of host government and the UN officials decides whether the applicant's knowledge and expertise is appropriate. TOKTEN consultants receive no payment, only a per diem allowance, insurance policy and reimbursement for travel expenses. The fee for an average TOKTEN consultant is about one-quarter that of a traditional international expert consultant. According to Newland and Patrick, "this feature of the program makes it popular and financially efficient, but limits participation to those diaspora members who are in a position to forgo their professional earnings for periods of voluntary consultancy."¹⁶

3.1.2.2 IOM and MIDA

In the field of migration and development, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) states: "Properly managed international migration holds enormous potential for the development of countries."¹⁷ In order to mitigate as much as possible the negative effects of 'brain drain' and to encourage the return of qualified nationals resulting in 'brain gain', the IOM focuses especially on "stimulating circular and temporary migration, which would imply persistent involvement of migrants with the countries or origin."¹⁸

¹⁵Newland and Patrick, Op. Cit., p.32.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.33.

¹⁷ <http://www.iom.int/en/migration>, the official website of the International Organization for Migration.

¹⁸ Ibid.

In an Intersessional Workshop conducted by IOM in 2005, particular attention was paid to recognize the desirability to engage diasporas as agents for development. Some of the concrete measures that were suggested included “increasing the transparency of government development strategies and goals; supporting the establishment of migrant networks while respecting their autonomy; and engaging migrants in the process of policy making and in development programmes in a variety of ways, including project identification, implementation and monitoring.”¹⁹ It was also proposed to identify diasporas through developing databases. Furthermore, it was recommended to foster a sense of double belonging among members of diasporas, for instance through introducing dual citizenship and stimulating political participation.

In terms of concrete policies, IOM has been particularly active in ‘migration management’ services mainly in the form of ‘assisted voluntary return’ (AVR) programmes. Such programmes are operated in collaboration with governments of destination countries, with IOM being the implementing body.²⁰ The focus of the AVR, however, has been very much on return rather than on development. An example of a programme with a stronger ‘development’ component and which is focused on ‘brain circulation’ and temporary returns is the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programme, which was launched in cooperation with Organization of African Union in 2001. MIDA is a capacity building programme that aims to ‘develop potential synergy between the profiles of African migrants and the demand from countries, by facilitating the transfer of vital skills and resources of the African diaspora to their countries of origin.’²¹ The merit of this program lies in its deliberate avoidance of return conditionality unlike other programs of IOM which were more narrowly focused on return and reintegration. Since its inception, nine MIDA projects have been funded, three of which have been financed entirely by European governments: Belgium for MIDA Great Lakes, Italy for MIDA Ethiopia and Ghana, and the Netherlands for research on the potential role of the Ghanaian diaspora in the health sector in Ghana.²²

¹⁹ Haas, *Op. Cit.*, p. 18-19.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ See <http://www.iom.int/mida/>

²² *Ibid.*

3.1.2.3 Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM)

The Global Commission on International Migration was established in 2003 with a mandate to ‘provide framework for the formulation of a coherent, comprehensive and global response to the issue of international migration.’²³ An initiative by the governments of Sweden, Switzerland, joined by those of Brazil, Morocco and the Philippines and supported by a core group of 32 states, the objective of the commission was to provide recommendations on how to strengthen the governance of international migration. The report, which was presented in October 2005, offers a comparatively comprehensive approach towards migration and development issue, which also goes beyond the usual focus on remittances. The recommendations of the report dealing specifically with the migration and development issues include the following:²⁴

- Remittances are private money and should not be appropriated by states. Governments and financial institutions should make it easier and cheaper to transfer remittances and thus encourage migrants to remit through formal transfer systems (recommendation 8).
- In countries of origin, measures to encourage the transfer and investment of remittances must be combined with macro-economic policies that are conducive to economic growth (recommendation 9).
- Diasporas should be encouraged to promote development by saving and investing in their countries of origin and participating in transnational knowledge networks (recommendation 10).
- States and International Organizations should formulate policies and programme that maximize the development impact of circular migration (recommendation 11).

GCIM sees an important role for home-town associations and diaspora organizations in collecting and transferring ‘collective remittances’ to their place of origin, which can be

²³ See ‘Report of the Global Commission on International Migration’, *Population and Development Review*, 2005, vol. 31 no. 4, pp.787-798.

²⁴ Ibid.

used for infrastructural and other projects that bring benefits to whole communities rather than to individual households.²⁵ Thus, the GCIM report distinguishes itself by the attention given to the issue of diaspora and development and not just remittances. The GCIM recommended that by supporting the establishment of professional diaspora organizations and other civil society entities that incorporate migrants, programmes can be developed that:

facilitate the transfer of skills and knowledge from the diaspora to their countries of origin. This might entail physical return, by means of short term secondments or sabbatical visits, but can also involve 'virtual return', using the video-conferencing and internet facilities that are available in even the poorest of countries.²⁶

An example of the above, given by GCIM, was the African Human Resources program of NEPAD ²⁷(New Partnership for Africa's Development) and UNESCO. The goal of this program is to create a database of Africans teaching in universities and high schools in Europe, United States of America, Canada and other parts of the world. This database will be available for African states and any other organization working in the field of education and teaching in Africa. Such databases are believed to constitute an essential information base through which users can identify the trained workforce they require to establish and maintain research networks and policy reforms.²⁸

Thus, the various studies and programmes initiated by various multilateral institutions like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, United Nations etc. point towards the role of diasporas in reversing the negative impacts of brain-drain for the countries of origin. The significance of these studies, programmes and initiatives lies in their effort to think beyond remittances or permanent return of migrants as prerequisites for development in home countries. These institutions are increasingly viewing diasporas as a human resource. These are persons who are aware of the country, are familiar with the

²⁵ GCIM Report 2005.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ This is an initiative of African states supported by the European Union and G8 countries and is committed to building and retaining within the continent critical human capacities for Africa's development.

²⁸ Haas, Op. Cit., p. 23.

cultural and social nuances of their homelands and therefore, they can play pivotal roles in development. On the other hand, the multilateral institutions possess the financial resources that can be used to help the diaspora organizations meet their goals. And the governments of home countries can play the all important role of bringing these together along with performing certain important functions as discussed below.

3.2 Role of Governments of Countries of Origin

The level of interest shown by various international organizations in working with diaspora supports the argument that the latter is being increasingly seen as a significant partner in the development process, especially in the developing countries. While almost all multilateral institutions mentioned above have stressed that the developmental impacts of international migration and diaspora are to be maximized, countries of origin must first and foremost strive to create a healthy, enabling and conducive environment for these non-state actors to play an important role. Hence it is reasonable for a diaspora's country of origin to attempt to court its nationals and their descendents who live abroad. As a result, governments of different countries have devised different policies and programmes to maximize the benefits from these transnational linkages. Although diverse in nature these policies and innovative methods to forge alliance with diaspora point towards the crucial role that the governments of sending countries play in translating this brain drain into brain gain.

It also points to the fact that diaspora are not a readymade resource to be used in developmental process, but one that needs to be cultivated and harnessed in a systematic way by the governments of sending countries. The role of state thus remains as important as ever even if non-state actors attain their own dynamics. As observed by Brinkerhoff, the state performs a multidimensional role in creating an enabling environment for non-state actors to function. This includes among other things, mandating, facilitating, resourcing, partnering and endorsing.²⁹ Through examples from countries like China,

²⁹ Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, 'Enabling Diaspora Development Contributions: Policies and Caveats.', 2006, Accessed at www.migration-boell.de/web/migration/46_1909.asp.

Mexico, Philippines, Africa and India, it can be illustrated how governments have been playing the above roles and how lessons can be drawn from these examples and implemented in similar contexts elsewhere also.

3.2.1 *Mandating*: This refers to the legal and regulatory framework that affects diaspora, all the way from citizenship rights (for example, Dual citizenship, voting rights, etc.) to basic rights that allow for diaspora to initiate activities in the homeland independent of state control and also laws governing the creation and operation of NGOs and businesses.

In India, the government performs the mandating function through grant of dual citizenship. The Indian Citizenship Act, 1955, enacted by Parliament originally provided for single citizenship in India. The Act was subsequently amended in 1986 and later in 2005. With the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2005, the concept of dual citizenship came into effect in India. There now exists a new form of Indian citizenship, the holders of which are known as Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs).

Before this, at the first Parvasi Bhartiya Divas in 2003, the then Prime Minister of India had announced grant of dual citizenship to Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs).³⁰ In 2004, by an amendment to the Citizenship Act, the facility of Overseas Citizenship of India was made available to PIOs in 16 specified countries. In the Parvasi Bhartiya Divas 2005 held in Mumbai, the Prime Minister had announced the Government's intention to extend this facility to PIOs of any country (except Pakistan and Bangladesh) that allows dual citizenship. This has since been given legal backing by the India Parliament. The Amended Act enables the Central Government to register, as an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI), any person of full age and capacity:

³⁰ Any person currently holding a non-Indian passport, who can prove their origin upto three generations before (or is the spouse of a citizen of India or person of Indian origin), is eligible for a Person of Indian Origin card.

- Who is a citizen of another country now, but was a citizen of India at the time of, or at any time after the commencement of the Constitution of India, on 26th January 1950;
- Who is a citizen of another country , but was eligible to become citizen of India at the time of commencement of the Constitution;
- Who is a citizen of another country , but belonged to a territory that became a part of India after 15th August 1947;
- Who is child or grandchild of such a citizen.

The OCIs have definite advantages over the PIO status holders in that the OCI is entitled to life-long visa free travel to India, whereas for PIOs it is for 15 years. Apart from this, an OCI enjoys all the rights granted to PIOs viz, right to acquire, hold, transfer or dispose off immovable properties in India, open rupee bank accounts in India, make investments in India etc. Their children can obtain admission in educational institutions in India. Despite parity with Indian citizens, in respect of facilities available in economic, financial and educational fields, the overseas citizens of India do not possess political rights as they are not entitled to vote or contest for any public office.

Political rights to overseas citizens have however been provided by the government of Mexico to its nationals residing in other countries. In absolute terms, Mexico today is the largest country of emigration with about 10 to 11 million Mexico born Mexicans living abroad, overwhelmingly in US.³¹ In recent past, Mexican government has come up with various initiatives to leverage this pool of resource, the most notable being the grant of political rights and participation.

From 1965 to early 1990s, Mexican government's policy towards its diaspora was notable only for its non-existence due to the historic distrust between the country and its migrants. However, the process of incorporating the diaspora into the developmental and policy making process started in 1990s with the granting of political representation to

³¹ A Latapi and E. Janssen, 'Migration, the Diaspora and Development: The case of Mexico', *Discussion paper prepared for the International Institute of Labour Studies, Geneva*, 2006, <http://www.ilo.org/inst>.

Mexicans residing abroad through the basic right to vote. Beginning with 1992, firstly an identity was provided to Mexican diaspora. The Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs renewed the *matricula consular* – a form of identification stating that the Mexican Government recognized the individual’s identity as a Mexican citizen and his/her address abroad.³² The *matricula* gained recognition in private and governmental US institutions. This was a process that enabled Mexican citizens to open banking accounts, enroll in educational institutions, obtain driver licenses and most importantly, provided one official means of identification when accessing a new job anywhere. The *matricula*, however did not provide the expatriate Mexicans the right to vote. Therefore, in 1997, the Mexican Constitution was modified to give expatriate Mexicans an explicit right to vote. Because of budgetary and other constraints, this initiative could not be implemented in the elections that were held in 2000. However, the issue re-surfaced again for the federal elections in 2006. This time, the issue received considerable public attention. Pressure from the diaspora was much stronger and much better organized due to the increasing political activism of organizations like the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME) and World Association of Mexicans Abroad (AMME). A resolution was finally passed by the Mexican Congress that gave, for the first time, Mexican expatriated anywhere in the world the right to a postal vote.³³

Apart from the right to vote, the Mexican government has also provided other means of political representation for the Mexican diaspora. In 2000, the Government created the ‘Institute for Mexicans Abroad’. A board of over one hundred representatives was elected from various caucuses organized by Consulates in US. These representatives, in turn elected a President. The Institute also has an executive director and it is part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Institute possesses both administrative and representative structures within the Mexican government. Stressing the importance of such an entity, Latapi and Janssen have rightly noted that “the aim is not simply to provide a legitimate structure for the representation of diaspora in Mexico. An additional

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

gain could be that, through this new form of representation, Mexicans in the US might strengthen their representation and lobbying power within that country.”³⁴

3.2.2 *Facilitating*: As a part of its facilitating role, the governments provide “incentives for diasporas, for example recognizing diasporas as important constituents and protecting or seeking to improve their quality of life abroad, providing a networking function among diaspora groups by organizing diaspora summits and diplomatic visits and creating specialized government agencies and initiatives to interface with diaspora.”³⁵

Over the last decade, the Indian Government has facilitated the diaspora in a number of ways, from simplification of investment rules to the formation of a government body and recently a separate Ministry to liaise between India and its diaspora. Most of these initiatives were a response to the report of the famous High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora headed by L.M.Singhvi, which was released by the Indian government in 2001. The Committee, established by the Government of India to facilitate the links of NRIs and PIOs with India, came up with recommendations for policies and strategies to create a “more conducive environment in India to leverage these invaluable resources.”³⁶ The terms of reference of the Committee included the following:³⁷

- Review the status of Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Non Resident Indians (NRIs) in the context of constitutional provisions, Laws and rules applicable to them both in India and in the country of their residence.
- Study the characteristics, aspirations, attitudes, requirements, strengths and weaknesses of Indian Diaspora and their expectations from India.
- Study the role that the PIOs and NRIs may play in the economic, social, and technological development of India.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Jennifer M.Brinkerhoff, ‘Enabling Diaspora Development Contributions: Policies and Caveats’, 2006, Accessed at www.migration-boell.de/web/migration/46_1909.asp .

³⁶ L.M.Singhvi, et al., *Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora*, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Non-Resident Indian and Persons of Indian Origin Division, Dec. 2001, <http://www.indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.htm>.

³⁷ Ibid.

- Examine the current regime that governs the travel, stay of PIOs in India and investments by PIOs in India, and recommend measures to resolve the problems faced by NRIs in these areas.
- Recommend a broad but flexible policy framework and country specific plans for a mutually beneficial relationship with the region or PIOs and NRIs, and for facilitating their interaction with India and their participation in India's economic development.

In response to the recommendations of the report, the Indian Government established a 'Non-Resident Indian and Persons of Indian Origin' Division within the Ministry of External Affairs which was soon converted into a separate Ministry for Overseas Affairs. Among other facilities made available to the diaspora by the Indian Government is the Investment Information Centre (IIC) which is a free 'single-window' agency for advice on nearly all issues associated with investment in India. It works with Indians, foreign investors and NRIs and is considered a 'nodal agency' for promoting investment in India by its diaspora members. It provides all necessary services for NRIs in setting up their investments, including explaining government policies and procedures, available incentives, necessary data for project selection and also assists in obtaining government approvals.³⁸

As a part of its facilitating role, the Government of India, from 2003 onwards, started holding an annual conclave of Overseas Indians called the *Parvasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD)*. This annual Indian Diaspora convention, organized by the Ministry of Overseas Affairs, is held every year on the ninth day of January.³⁹ PBD Conventions (seven in all till 2009) provide a platform for exchange of views and networking to the PIOs on matters of common interest. Also, these conventions enable the Government of India to better understand the expectations of the overseas Indians from the land of their ancestors and to acknowledge their role in India's all round development. PBD Conventions are also important because they are attended by the Chief Ministers of all states who

³⁸ Newland and Patrick, Op. Cit., p. 89.

³⁹ This date marks the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India in 1915 after spending 21 years in South Africa.

highlight the investment potential in their states and extend support for diaspora investments.

Through these PBD Conventions, the Government has introduced various policies and programs like the Dual Citizenship, the Overseas Indian facilitation Centre, etc. The Global Indian Knowledge Network was launched at the 7th PBD (held in Chennai from 9th-11th January, 2009) with an aim to create a virtual think tank by connecting the Indian Diaspora. Also, during the 7th PBD, it was announced that qualified professional holding Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card would henceforth be allowed to practice in India.⁴⁰

However, much before India started acknowledging the significance of these transnational actors in the overall development of the country, its neighbour China had already been facilitating the participation of over 1 million Overseas Chinese Professionals (henceforth OCPs) in the development process in China through a number of innovative policies, programs and activities. The degree of involvement of the Chinese Government in facilitating its diaspora can be discerned from the fact that in People's Republic of China (PRC) there are five central agencies that are in charge of affairs of overseas Chinese. They are- the State Council for OCAO (Overseas Chinese Affairs Office); Committee for Overseas Chinese Affairs of the National People's Congress; the Committee for Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Overseas Chinese Affairs of the National People's Political Consultation Congress; the Zhigong Party and the National Federation of Returned overseas Chinese. Apart from these five organizations, a wide range of departments has been involved in the work related to OCPs. Among them are the Organization Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, the Ministry of Education(MoE), the Ministry of Science and Technology(MoST) and the Ministry of Public Security (MoPS).⁴¹

⁴⁰ *The Hindu*, dated 10-01-2009.

⁴¹ Xiang Biao, 'Promoting Knowledge Exchange through Diaspora Networks' in Clay Wescott and Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, (eds.) *Converting Migration Drains into Gains: Harnessing the Resources of Overseas Professionals*, Manila: Asian Development Bank, Draft manuscript accessed at www.adb.org/Documents/Events/2006/.../Diaspora-Draft.pdf, 2006, p.28.

Besides setting up various government and semi-government departments, the Chinese government has been carrying out a range of activities that facilitate diaspora involvement in the homeland. These activities and programs aim to function as bridges or platforms for knowledge exchange. In his study on Chinese diaspora networks, Biao informs that since late 1990s, OCAO has organized teams of OCPs to visit under particular themes to provide technical advice in specific areas. Examples include the Asian financial crisis visit in 1998 and the venture capital and high technology visit in 2003. These visits are well received by local governments and there are a good number of cases where visiting OCPs helped local institutes solve technical problems.⁴²

The Chinese Government also facilitates the diaspora by facilitating information exchange between the China based institutes and OCPs. Besides maintaining websites for every department related to overseas Chinese affairs, the flagship newspaper of the Ministry of Science and Technology called *Science and Technology News* carries a special page called “Who Takes the Plate?” where institutes all over the country publicize their technological problems and seek solutions . OCAO further passes on these quests to OCP associations overseas through its e-newsletter *Snapshots of Science and Technology for Overseas Chinese*.⁴³

Another significant activity for facilitating cooperation and enhancing diaspora participations in Chinese affairs is the annual fairs, a platform which brings OCPs and domestic institutes together directly. These fairs are largely an initiative of the municipal governments of the provinces where they are held (for example, the Guangzhou Overseas Students Fair) and are co-organized by MoE and MoST. A similar but more selective platform is provided by the famous Jilin Convention on Consultation and Cooperation between Overseas Chinese Professionals and Domestic Enterprises which is jointly organized by the state OCAO and the Jilin Provincial Office for Overseas Chinese Affairs. Through this Convention, suitable proposals from OCPs are forwarded to local

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

enterprises, and the one that attracts the interest of three or more is invited. On an average, 50-60 OCPs are invited every year.⁴⁴

Few other countries like the Philippines also pioneered novel approaches to facilitate knowledge transfer through its diaspora. Most successful has been the Science and Technology Advisory Council (STAC) which began as a project of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in early 1990s with an aim to encourage overseas Filipino scientists to form their own associations and initiate knowledge transfers. STAC had chapters in USA, Canada, and Sweden; however the most active is STAC in Japan. Its current membership includes students, professionals and other Filipinos who are interested in and willing to advance science and technology as a necessary tool for Philippine development.⁴⁵

3.2.3 *Resourcing*: Another crucial area where the governments of sending countries can contribute to enhancing the developmental impacts of diaspora involvement is Resourcing or Funding. This may include direct government funding as in case of matching grants for diaspora investment or the establishment of financial incentives that encourage diaspora contributions, such as taxation policies that provide exemption to diaspora investments.

In India, perhaps the best known example of resourcing is the Punjab Government's NRI Scheme 2.35. Launched in 2005, under this scheme a matching grant is provided by the state government for developmental projects initiated in rural areas with NRI collaboration. As mentioned in the case study in the preceding chapter, a number of NRI led projects that were suffering a financial crunch have benefited from this scheme.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Jeremaiah Opiniano and T.A Castro, 'Promoting Knowledge Transfer Activities Through Diaspora Networks: A Pilot Study on the Philippines' in Wescott and Brinkerhoff, Op. Cit., p. 57.

Other examples of diaspora resourcing include Mexico's famous 3 for 1 matching program (also called the 3 X 1 citizen's initiative) which in some areas also includes an additional match from the private sector. The 3 X 1 was a popular initiative by the migrant groups who wanted to make improvements in their home towns. Initially, the migrants provided a set amount and the state and local governments matched it (2 X 1). Since 1998, this has included the federal government also. From 1992 to 2002, the program carried out 400 projects in which the migrants invested 5 million dollars out of the total investment of 15 million dollars.⁴⁶

In China, the Government's resourcing function has taken an interesting form. This includes funding short term visits of overseas Chinese professionals and sponsoring OCPs to work in China. A typical example of the first is the Ministry of Education Special Fund for sponsoring an Overseas Student's Short-Term Visit and Work in China. The fund supports visits for academic exchange, training and transferring technology to under-developed regions. Since the plan started in 1996, the government has sponsored about 7000 OCP visits. Support from the local government is the key to success. While MoE subsidizes international trips, local governments that want OCPs to visit their areas normally cover all the costs of travel and accommodation in China.⁴⁷

3.2.4 *Endorsing*: Endorsing refers to actions that publicize, praise and encourage individual diasporans and diaspora organizations. Government's role here relates to reinforcing cultural values and influencing attitudes. Government endorsement confirms the significance of Diaspora to the homeland society, enhancing their legitimacy as development actors and thereby contributing to their social status.

At the annual Parvasi Bhartiya Divas celebrations, the Indian Government honours members of Indian Diaspora who have actively involved themselves in political, social and economic development processes in both home and host countries. Every year, few members of the Indian diaspora are felicitated by the President of India with the Parvasi

⁴⁶ Latapi and Janssen, Op. Cit., p. 20

⁴⁷ Xiang Biao, 'Promoting Knowledge Exchange through Diaspora Networks' in Wescott and Brinkerhoff, Op. Cit., p.30.

Bhartiya Sammaan Awards for their contributions and achievements in different walks of life.

Similarly, in 2006, Ghana's investment promotion agency honored 20 diasporans with "Planters of the Seed" Awards for setting up business units in Ghana. Even the Chinese government takes its 'endorsing' role seriously by acknowledging and publicizing the achievements of Overseas Chinese Professionals. The Government made a total of 939 awards to outstanding OCPs at special conferences in 1991, 1997 and 2003 for their activities in China.⁴⁸

These above four, namely Mandating, Facilitating, Resourcing and Endorsing are the major functions that the governments of countries with substantial diaspora presence in other countries can and are performing to leverage these transnational linkages in a more systematic and nuanced way. However, by no means it should be assumed that all is positive in this government-diaspora relationship. There are certain factors that merit some caution here. Firstly, it cannot be taken for granted that governments will be neutral to diaspora's contributions to development. As rightly cautioned by Brinkerhoff :

Not all diaspora contributions may be constructive and effective, and even when they are, the homeland government may view the diaspora as threatening or competing with its own legitimacy and effectiveness...The additional constraints to enabling diaspora policy influence for countries emerging from or with a history of intra-ethnic conflict are obvious. Many developing and transitioning country governments view diasporas with suspicion and antagonism, fearful of their potential for fueling political opposition.⁴⁹

Secondly, diaspora involvement may only selectively benefit families and communities, it may create additional tensions with differentiated societies, especially when it accentuates income gaps for instance in the case of rural Punjab where one region(Doaba

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, 'Diaspora Mobilization Factors and Policy Option' in Wescott and Brinkerhoff, Op. Cit., p.110.

region) is marked by development, thanks to the government–diaspora nexus whereas the other (Malwa region) is suffering from poverty and backwardness.

Thirdly, there is a possibility that in democracies like India, characterized by realities of differential access to power and the pervasiveness of interest groups, diasporas will be seen as additional interest group vying for power and resources alongside other domestic actors.

3.3 Role of Host Governments

Contrary to the popular perception that the governments of countries receiving migrants are always suspicious and uncomfortable about the latter's presence in their countries, there are cases where these governments have acted as facilitators of diaspora led development in countries of origin. While focusing primarily on increasing the developmental impact of remittances by reducing the transaction costs, the governments of some European countries have been playing proactive roles in assisting the transfer of knowledge and technical know how through various schemes and programmes often in collaboration with international agencies and organizations. The examples from countries like UK, Netherlands and France throw light on the potential role that the governments of migrant receiving countries can play in indirectly helping the development processes of migrants' home countries.

The Netherlands boasts of what is probably the first migration and development programme- the Dutch REMPLD project (Reintegration of Emigrant Manpower and Promotion of Local Opportunities for Development). With a focus on return migration, the idea of the research project was that the returning migrants could use their skills and savings for local development by contributing to existing projects or founding new ones. However, later in the research it was found that the investment opportunities for migrants in their regions of origin were very limited, and that in fact, development in migrant

sending regions was a prerequisite for return or investment rather than a consequence of return migration.⁵⁰

Therefore the policy emphasis shifted away from return migration to circular migration as an optimum strategy to reconcile the interests of migrants and of the sending and destination countries. Circular or temporary migration was seen as benefiting all parties involved-“it allows developed countries to fill temporary job openings, migrants to earn an income and to acquire skills, and origin countries to benefit from skills and knowledge transfers, while the brain drain is counteracted.”⁵¹ Based on this premise, the Dutch government has been following a very positive stance regarding support to migrants and migrant organizations involved in development cooperation. Though the government does indirectly support capacity building and encourages migrant organizations, it strongly believes that the initiative should rest mainly with the migrants and migrant organizations themselves, as well as the decision as to how individual and collective remittances are to be used. One of the famous programmes specifically targeted at migrants and funded by the Dutch Government is the IntEnt programme. It is a programme intended to help migrants set up small private businesses in countries of origin. IntEnt is an NGO that was established in 1996 and since then it is implementing promotional programmes focused on ‘bridging the two worlds’. IntEnt stresses that it does not focus on return migration, but on circular migration that helps in reaping the advantages of simultaneously living in and having experience in two countries. The programme emphasizes the personal responsibility of the entrepreneurs, who are expected to finance most of their project with their own funds. However the programme provides possibilities to obtain additional external financing from a bank in the country of origin, in most cases with a supplementary guarantee from IntEnt.⁵²

Similar to the Netherlands, United Kingdom and its Department for International Development (DfID) has been active in the field of migration and development and has played a leading role in knowledge formation on the issue of migration and development

⁵⁰ Heinemeijer et al.(1976) as cited in Haas, Op. Cit., p. 32.

⁵¹ Haas, Op. Cit., p. 35.

⁵² Ibid.

policies through organizing and funding conferences and through funding research studies. A particular characteristic of these studies, according to Haas, is that they go ‘beyond remittances’ and cover a broad range of issues, including diaspora involvement in the development of sending countries.⁵³ Haas further notes that UK has played a leading role not only in designing but also in actually implementing policies to facilitate remittances. According to the DfID, stimulating remittances fits in with its main objective of poverty reduction, and a win-win situation can thus easily be created-“remittances are a fast and effective way of shifting resources to the developing world, thus giving the means for poverty reduction and sustainable development, while from a private sector point of view, increasing the value of remittances will increase the size of the market.”⁵⁴

France, which until 1970s, advocated policies that were strongly associated with the return of migrants to their countries of origin, witnessed a gradual evolution of this policy into that of ‘co-development.’ The policy is based on the principle that migrants are central actors in the development process of receiving countries and that their contributions should be recognized and encouraged. A distinct feature of this policy was the specific role that the new policy attached to development-oriented diaspora organizations in France known as OSIM (*Organizations de Solidarité Internationale Issues des Migrations*). In 1995 the Programme Development Local Migration (PDLM) was established as the first concrete measure in the direction of the current co-development policies. The programme aims to assist migrants wishing to establish enterprises in their countries of origin. The programme concentrates on facilitating local development projects through conducting feasibility studies and on support in detecting project partners such as the OSIM, municipalities and development NGOs.⁵⁵

Another priority of the ‘Co-development’ strategy of French Government is to mobilize the skills and know how of the diasporas for the benefit of the origin countries. This is based on the idea that ‘development is not possible without guidance and the transfer of

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ UK Remittance Working Group, *UK Remittance Market*, 2005, <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/uk-remittance-report.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Haas, Op. Cit., pp. 67-69.

expertise.’ Thus in order to promote brain circulation, one of the programmes involves short term missions for scientific and technical diaspora members to lecture at the universities or participate in research in their home countries. Currently the French government covers all the travel and accommodation expenses related to this.⁵⁶

Thus, recognition of diaspora as development actors by international agencies, and governments alike highlights the significant role that these state and supra state actors can play in shaping the transnational public spheres constituted by diasporas, thereby enhancing the developmental impacts of this resource. Not just sending governments but receiving governments also play a crucial role in facilitating the capital as well as skill transfers to countries of origin through diasporic public spheres.

The next chapter will explore in detail the formation and functioning of one such transnational public sphere in the Indian state of Punjab and how it is impacting developmental outcomes at the local levels.

⁵⁶ IOM, *Mainstreaming Migration into Development Policy Agendas*, International Dialogue on Migration. Geneva: IOM Report, 2005, http://www.iom.int//DOCUMENTS/OFFICIAL_TXT/EN/Migr_Development_28-07.pdf.

DEVELOPMENT VIA TRANSNATIONAL SPHERES: CASE STUDY OF RURAL PUNJAB

Although definitive numbers are impossible to secure, the state of Punjab is thought to be one of India's most significant out migration regions and exhibits very close links to several countries of Punjabi settlement overseas. According to estimates by the NRI Sabha officials in Jalandhar, Punjab, more than five million Punjabis, documented and undocumented are currently overseas.¹ This represents almost one-third of the estimated number of Indians overseas, for a state with less than two percent of the total Indian population. Margaret W. Roberts rightly notes that this over representation of Punjabis overseas becomes evident when traveling through the state, where "one is struck by not only the intimate geographical knowledge many locals have with the sites of Punjabi settlements overseas, such as Vancouver in Canada, Southall and Wolverhampton in the UK, and Yuba City in California, but also especially in the winter months, the number of British, Canadian and US citizens of Punjabi origin visiting family and friends in the region."² Such concentration is a result of the sustained and long term migration networks between Punjab and multiple sites of settlement.

The sheer number of overseas Punjabis- and their sustained connections with their homeland is also reflected in state based responses to this group. In 1996, an NRI Sabha was developed in Jalandhar primarily to deal with NRI concerns. Subsequently, the NRI

¹ The NRI Sabha, Jalandhar is an organization representing the interests of NRIs, especially with reference to property related matters; field notes.

² Margaret W. Roberts, 'Returning, Remitting, Reshaping: Non-Resident Indians and the Transformation of society and space in Punjab' in Jackson, Peter, Craig, Philip and Dwyer, Charles (eds.), *Transnational Spaces*, London, 2004, p.80.

Sabha has fostered other cultural and investment initiatives, and the government of Punjab has also responded to NRI concerns through various means. Punjab is an interesting case to examine because even while the High Level Committee report on Indian diaspora examined three state based NRI initiatives (Punjab, Gujarat and Kerala), it commented relatively extensively on the Punjab case, describing its approach as ‘innovative’ and its organization as ‘highly professional’³

4.1 Emergence and geographical spread of Punjabi Diaspora

Overseas Punjabis, estimated at anywhere between 5-5.5 million, are now an established migrant community settled in different countries across the globe. They have grown into a mature Diaspora constituted predominantly of Sikhs but also of Hindus and Muslims. Punjabi transnational communities broadly comprises of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim migrants who left Punjab during the British period and also, the post independence migrants from both East and West Punjab, though much of the scholarship has focused on Sikh Punjabi migrants.

The notion of communities having global links that form a kind of transnational space, a public sphere, social field or linkages of multiple translocalities (to use Appadurai’s term) may be a relatively new idea, but in the case of Punjab these links and processes are not new. Punjab, especially the Doaba region has been a traditional site of international out migration for over a century.

Tracing the migration roots of overseas Punjabis, Thandi assesses the factors responsible for this phenomenon:

Punjabi migration to various overseas locations in Southeast and East Asia, Australia, Africa, Europe and North America reflected the changing socio-economic conditions in the Punjab (creating supply side ‘push’ factors) and the changing structure of employment opportunities abroad

³ L.M.Singhvi, et al., *Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora*, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Non-Resident Indian and Persons of Indian Origin Division, Dec. 2001, <http://www.indiandiaspora.nic.in/contents.htm>, pp.541-542.

(generating demand side 'pull' factors). Unlike overseas migration from other parts of India, Punjabi migration really commenced during the final quarter of the 19th century and was very much a product of the strategic and influential position which Punjab acquired within the British Empire. This influence manifested itself in growing military recruitment and increased investment in agriculture leading to substantial growth in agricultural export revenues.⁴

Thus, the imperial incorporation took Punjabi, predominantly rural, to various regions of the empire such as Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand and further expanding towards East Africa. Apart from the British managed migration, there was also an expansion of independent migration to US and Canada in search of better employment opportunities. As Thandi notes, much of this independent migration was confined to the central Doaba districts of Punjab.

The post independence period witnessed favourable conditions which facilitated further migration and once again the Doaba region emerged as the dominant region sending migrants abroad, especially to United Kingdom and North America. Thandi maps out other destinations explored by Punjabis, for instance, the Gulf which became an attractive destination after the first OPEC price hike of 1973-74. Besides, with the end of Cold War in 1989, Punjabis migrated to countries like Greece, Italy and Spain through the newly opened land and sea routes.⁵ Thus, the geographical spread of the Punjabi transnational community was no accident; it very much reflected the changing requirements of the British Empire during the colonial period and the shifting internal and external environments in the post independence period.

It is not surprising then that it is the Doaba region that has in the past and is currently witnessing the most significant impact of transnational practices at different levels—macroeconomic, regional, community and household. Considering the bureaucratic indifference, continuing fiscal crisis and consequent cutback in expenditure on rural

⁴, Shinder S. Thandi, 'Punjabi Diaspora and Homeland Relations', *Seminar*, no. 567, 2006, p. 49.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

development in Punjab, this impact has attained a measure of significance and holds a potential role for economic and social development of rural Punjab.

4.2 Diaspora –Homeland linkages in Punjab

Overseas Punjabis, have over the years, developed and maintained meaningful linkages with their homeland; linkages ranging from family ties, village welfare associations and different forms of economic, political, social, religious and cultural exchanges- all are thriving in Punjab.(see Table 2) The forces of globalization have further facilitated and accentuated these connections. Assessing the impact of globalization on these multilayered linkages, Thandi elaborates:

Globalization has reformulated and reshaped these linkages in two fundamental ways: they have transformed from being unidirectional to multi-directional and are increasingly influenced by *intra-diaspora* exchanges within a transnational space. In other words, Punjabis in Australia link up with those in UK, USA and Canada and vice versa, and their link with Punjab – as the anchor – is just one aspect of their transnational linkages. For example, Inter-net discussion groups such as Sikh Diaspora and Learning Zone discuss issues relating to the global Punjabi community and local events, viz. the banning of turbans in French government schools or the staging of the controversial play *Behzti* in Birmingham, UK, quickly transform into global community issues.⁶

Table 2: Examples of Linkages within the Punjabi Transnational Community

<i>Economic</i>	<i>Social/Cultural</i>	<i>Religious</i>	<i>Political</i>
1) Family and Person Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – cultural tourism – sports exchanges – musical exchanges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – visiting religious leaders – visiting sants/sadhus/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – overseas branches of main Punjabi and Indian political

⁶ Ibid.,p.52.

<p>Tangible Remittances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Income - Gifts - Services <p>Social Remittances (Intangibles)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ideas and values - attitudes and behaviour patterns - identities - social capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - educational exchanges - Internet Discussion Groups - wedding and bridal services - video/audio/CD exchanges - print media - Bollywood/Punjabi cinema - Asian Satellite TV - arts/theatre/exhibitions 	<p>swamis/maulvis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visiting kirtan/dhadi jathas - video/audio cassettes/cds - Joint celebration of religious Festivals - live media broadcasts from holy places such as Amritsar/ Anandpur Sahib on important Religious festivals 	<p>Parties and other political Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - links with factional groups, eg. Hindutva or pro-Khalistan Groups - human rights organizations - development of 'advocacy networks' with other NGOs
<p>2) Government/Institutional/Regulatory</p> <p>Facilities for NRIs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trading opportunities, e.g. ethnic foods - promotion of tourism - trade fairs - financial services 	<p><i>Community/Village level Networks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - philanthropic projects and charitable donations - emergency/humanitarian aid - hospitals - educational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Websites on Indian religions-separate for each major tradition 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – property transactions/ services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishments – village infrastructure 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – educational services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – village sports tournaments 		
<p>3) Indian e-business</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – charitable organisations such as Pingalwara, Amritsar or Amar Dass Mission – municipal/village websites 		

Source: Shinder S. Thandi, 'Punjabi Diaspora and Homeland Relations', *Seminar*, 2006, no. 567, p.56.

The linkages as mentioned in the table above, especially the ones established through the formal channels like the village welfare associations, have initiated and contributed significantly in the creation of public spheres that are transnational in nature and spread. These transnational public spheres are impacting the development prospects in rural Punjab in a substantial way, adding new dimensions to the concepts of participation, democracy and development.

While there has been extensive research on the cultural issues surrounding diasporas like those of identity and interface with host societies, cultural dilution and hybridization, Diaspora can no longer be treated as a cultural phenomenon with no bearing on development. There is a dearth of serious academic research on how the diasporic communities, especially the Non Resident Punjabis (NRPs) create transnational public spaces and use them as a medium to engage and participate in development and deliberative processes impacting outcomes at the local level.

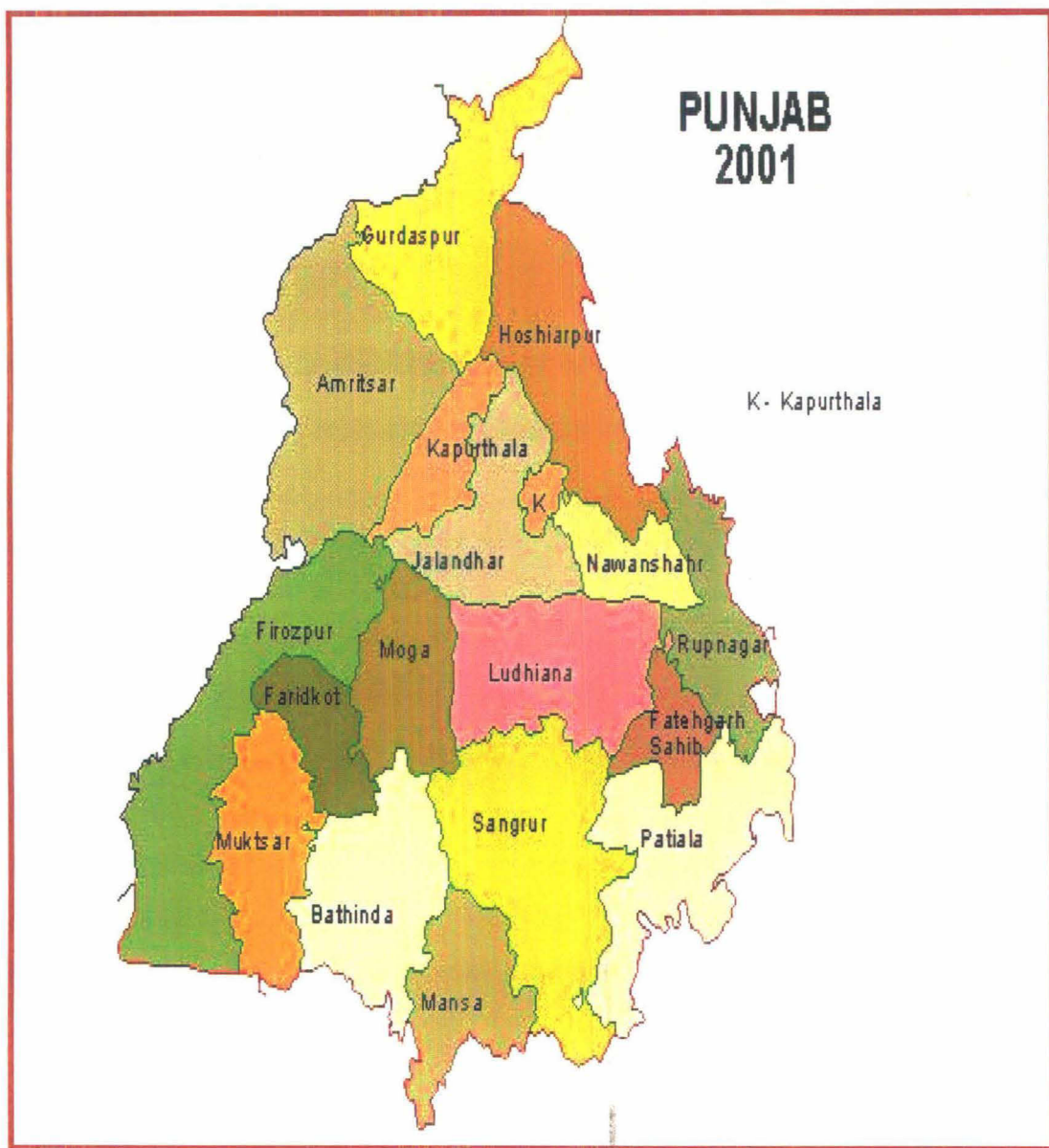


Figure 4.1 Map of Punjab .Source: www.censusindia.gov.in

Rural Punjab boasts of many instances that merit detailed study if one wants to discern the working of various transnational processes and dynamics mentioned earlier (chapter 1) viz; transnational networks, social capital, civil society and Home Town Associations, etc, all of which have helped in the constitution of transnational public spheres. These spheres have considerably broadened the scope of participation for new actors and opened new alternatives for development where the old ones were proving to be insufficient due to multiple factors ranging from bureaucratic apathy to lack of political will to the acute fiscal crisis that had gripped the state for years.

4.3 Transnationalism and the Transformation of Rural Space in Punjab

What follows is an attempt to reveal the transformations and changes at local levels entailed by the transnational linkages by focusing on five villages of Doaba region in Eastern Punjab namely Palahi and Athouli near Phagwara in district Kapurthala, Dhesian Kahna in District Jalandhar, Kharoudi in district Hoshiarpur and Dhahan- Kaleran in district Nawanshahar. (See Figure 4.1)

4.3.1 Palahi, Distt. Kapurthala

4.3.1.1 Background

Although instances of Punjabi villages with transnational linkages are quite numerous, Palahi has a unique place of pride among them and many firsts to its credit. The village has been profiled in the TV and print media as a local as well as a national success story. It holds the distinction of being the first Indian village to have an internet connection, a website of its own and now the first village in India to have an underground sewerage system.

Located on a link road between Phagwara on the main GT road and the Hoshiarpur road, with a population of about 3800 and an equal number of former residents settled abroad,

Palahi has all the ingredients of a global village.⁷ Nestled in the cash rich Doaba heartland, Palahi's description has often tempted people to take a detour from NH1 to visit this modern village. In contrast to many villages in India which still don't have proper roads, electricity and drinking water, this village is so advanced in information technology administration and overall development that even Bill Clinton, the former President of USA made it a point to visit and spend a day here during his last official tour to India.

The history of Palahi's transnational linkages goes back to late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Palahi, like many other villages in Punjab benefited from the early migrations to North America (the first wave of migration occurred in 1890). Contributions from these migrants helped in the establishment of an Anglo Vernacular school in Palahi in 1919. Palahi set up its own Educational Society as early as 1922 and village elders believe that US\$ 17,000 was donated by Palahi men working in North America at this time.⁸ This phenomenon saw an upwards trend in the coming years with the frequency and intensity of out migration increasing year after year. The transnational flow of funds and ideas also intensified resulting in the transformation of the village. It is to be noted that this transformation was not just at the level of individual households due to remittances, rather this was a transformation at the community or the village level due to collective action.

4.3.1.2 The Present Picture

Today Palahi is a village with a website of its own (www.plahi.net) with each of the 3800 or so villagers having an e-mail address, banks with ATMs, a Rs.30-lakh sound proof community hall with a capacity for 1100 people; an acoustic feature filled auditorium with seating capacity of 1500; a Rs.20 lakh school building, a Rs.5 lakh mosque for the sole Muslim family in the village, an indoor stadium a swimming pool, and a library. When it was noticed that the library got only male participation, an all woman gym was

⁷ Field notes.

⁸ Field notes.

given space in the same premises and a crèche was set next to it. Soon there was significant number of women readers in the library.⁹ Formal education has also not been neglected and a Rural Polytechnic Institute (See Fig. 4.2) was set up in 1984 which has since then played an instrumental role in ensuring the progress of the villagers by educating and training the rural youth. The polytechnic also runs computer courses with the assistance of British Council Division and diplomas recognized by Cambridge University! Access to email is free and the polytechnic ensures that even computer illiterates have access to IT. Email printouts are sent to the recipients' home every evening and internet traffic is significant as almost every family has a kin abroad.¹⁰

Not to forget the host of modern, scientific and environment friendly technologies that the village makes use of in their everyday lives from solar technology to bio gas plants. According to Mr. Gurmeet Palahi, the enterprising Principal of the Rural Polytechnic, out of the nearly 300 or more community bio gas plants in Punjab, Palahi's is the only one that is functioning. Now, many more environment friendly technologies, inspired from developed countries are on their way to be introduced in the village. For instance, the *Duckweed Technology* to treat waste water in conjunction with pisciculture. This has the potential of offering effective waste water treatment besides providing economic returns as well as generating employment opportunities in the village; *Fuel Efficient Crematorium* which enables full cremation with roughly half the normal quantity of wood used and *Ferro Cement Septic Tanks* for effective disposal of human excreta for populations that cannot afford the high cost sewerage systems. Since environment conservation is high on the agenda of the villagers and many talk as if they have just returned from an Earth Summit, there are arrangements for preservation of ponds and for rain water harvesting. Solar Energy lamps are a very common sight in the village.

⁹ Roberts, Op. Cit., p. 80.

¹⁰ Interview with Mr. Gurmeet Singh, Principal, National Rural Development Society of Palahi on 2nd Dec, 2008 at Palahi.



Figure 4.2: The Rural Polytechnic Institute at Palahi

More recently, the village embarked on its way to becoming the first Indian village to have an underground sewerage system despite being denied funds from the Rural Development department of the Punjab government. Palahi villagers realized the gravity of the problem posed by lack of sewage drainage but the government officials threw up their hands. “There simply isn’t any scheme for this. No village in India has an underground sewage”; they were told.¹¹ But this didn’t deter the villagers to go on with the project. The task of funding and execution of this project, like many other developmental projects earlier, was undertaken by the overseas members of the village.

¹¹ Interview with Mr. Gurmeet Singh, Principal, National Rural Development Society of Palahi on 3rd Dec. 2008 at Palahi.

4.3.1.3 Transformation through Transnationalism

More important than what Palahi has, is how it manages to achieve it. Among the various factors that play a part in the transformation of village life, Diaspora and the related transnational processes is most crucial. In case of Palahi, funds raised by NRIs and their involvement were crucial in the execution and completion of most of the projects mentioned, especially in the absence of adequate funding and cooperation from the government.

The efforts of the members of Diaspora i.e. villagers settled abroad are most noteworthy in this regard. Among others, the name of Mr. Jagait Singh Plahi stands out for his active involvement in development at the grassroots, especially his tireless efforts in fundraising and supervisory activities. Mr. Palahi was the village head or Sarpanch for many years. He is now a permanent Canadian resident and spends his time visiting his family in Victoria, Canada, touring throughout North America collecting money for village projects and returning to Palahi to oversee developments. His global mobility is central to his fundraising effectiveness and he doesn't hesitate in calling himself and other NRIs like him "international beggars".¹²

Jagait Singh Palahi and many others like him are able to effectively channelize their social capital, particularly through networks linking them with members of diaspora in other parts of the world who happen to share the same norms, values and backgrounds. A relationship of trust is thus easily established among the members of diasporic networks. But most of all, they are able to leverage what Harris and Renzio call the 'transferred social capital' i.e. networks and relationships that continue to exist following the relocation of an actor and that result in the creation of a transnational public sphere facilitating exchange of capital and ideas across borders.¹³

¹² Field notes.

¹³ J.Harris, and P. de Renzio, 'Missing Link or analytically missing? The Concept of Social Capital', *Journal of International Development*, vol. 9 no. 7, 1997, p.933.

The effectiveness of this transnational sphere was further enhanced in the case of Palahi with the setting up of National Rural Development Society of Palahi (NRDSP) in 1983. The society, registered as a non governmental organization (NGO) with the Punjab Government, is since then responsible for proper channeling of funds raised by members of Palahi settled overseas. The rural polytechnic was also a result established through this NGO. Highlighting the importance of setting up this NGO, Mr. Gurmit Singh (principal of the Rural Polytechnic) observes, “There are many projects that were started with NRI contributions which proved to be unproductive due to mismanagement and mishandling of funds.”¹⁴ He cites the examples of hospitals in nearby villages of Ghurye and Aurh which are lying in dilapidated conditions at present. Mr. Singh further notes that it is better to work through NGOs as the government executed projects often involve problems of corruption, middlemen, commissions, and embezzlements and therefore turn out to be more expensive. He recalls the example of Indoor Stadium which was built with NRI mobilized funds through the NGO with the cost of Rs.20 lakh whereas the government estimates were to the tune of Rs.45 lakh! Mr. Singh further adds that collecting money through an NGO rather than village council or panchayat has the advantage of allowing funding decisions to be made independently of the local Block Development officer.

Interestingly, the NGO functions are also performed by the Gurudwaras in the village. Most villages in Punjab have at least one Gurudwara which acts as a central gathering point and spiritual focus for the community. As a measure of the transnational networks that Palahi is embedded within, three of the five persons in the Gurudwara management committee are Canadian residents who meet annually during the Gurudwara’s main festival- the birthday of sixth guru, Guru Hargobind. It is during such festivals that people from the village gather and discuss about the common problems faced by the villagers, their needs and the ways and means of meeting those needs are also discussed. Added to this, an annual survey of the village is conducted by NRDSP to find out the needs of the village. Mr. Singh rightly points out that such a survey is necessary to avoid any unwanted or unplanned expenditure and so that the NRI contributions of time, money and

¹⁴ Interview with Mr. Gurmit Singh on 12th Dec,2008 at Palahi.

ideas can be utilized most productively. Thus, any unawareness on the part of NRIs is rectified by committed individuals from the village thereby enhancing the efficacy of the transnational public sphere.

Information and communication are vital components in the creation and sustenance of networks and public spheres. This requirement is met with the help of improved communication technologies, thanks to processes and forces of globalization, thus allowing villagers greater and more regular contact with their relatives. The village has more than 300 phone connections for nearly 500 houses and 5 PCOs offering the ability both to make and receive international calls. More personalized efforts included that of Mr. Gurmit Singh who acted as a type of local correspondent for an international Punjabi language newspaper, the Indo-Canadian Times. Most evenings he would scan the local newspapers and select stories he thought people overseas might be interested in. Late in the evening he sends the stories to the Vancouver based newspaper (earlier this was done through fax while now the more convenient mode of email is used). Another communications resource that the people of Palahi particularly pride themselves on is the polytechnic internet connection. All villagers and visiting NRIs can send and receive emails through this connection and it also enables the principal of the polytechnic to maintain contact with Jagait Singh Palahi, the chairman of the village development society (NRDSP) as he tours the globe gathering funds.¹⁵ This situation, a village with an internet connection was seen as rather unique in India, and in one local television story Palahi was termed a 'cyber village'. The report's story line reveals how processes of time-space compression have introduced spatial complexity to this village through its contradictory relations with nearby local government and distant global migrants overseas. The state officials in Phagwara, a three kilometer drive away, remains as inaccessible as ever to the villagers here. But their NRI relatives are only a click away.¹⁶

This type of communication technology has enabled Palahi to promote itself through a monthly internet newsletter sent to Palahi people overseas and others who have a

¹⁵ Field observation.

¹⁶ 'Cyber village on self help mission', Gajinder Singh, January 5, 2000, TV Today.

connection to the village and also to various development agencies and environmental NGOs in Europe. As a result of this global connectedness, in November, 2008 Palahi was approached by Germany's Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety for assistance concerning their efforts to support and develop pilot projects on sustainable use and supply of energy in developing and transforming countries.¹⁷

The internet newsletter is increasingly becoming a central means through which villagers connect themselves more closely to a globally dispersed community, and is an example of how new globalizing technologies are intensifying, extending and transforming traditional immigrant networks. It also shows how space becomes 'folded and creased' as networks transform physical distance through the circulation of information.¹⁸

What is important to note in the case of Palahi is that while it was the government apathy and lack of cooperation that encouraged the diaspora to emerge as a significant actor impacting developmental outcomes at the village level, yet government is not completely removed from the picture. State cooperation in the form of various schemes introduced by it has been sought from time to time. For instance, Punjab government launched a scheme in 2005 called NRI 2.35 under which the state government would provide a matching grant for developmental projects initiated with NRI collaboration. At the NRI Sabha meeting in January 2008, the government announced that it would raise its grant allocation under this scheme.¹⁹

4.3.2 Kharoudi, Distt.Hoshiarpur

It is a well known fact that while Punjab has had a remarkable record in modernizing its rural agrarian economy, the quality of life in villages has failed to match the rising aspirations for better living conditions fuelled by rising incomes. The condition of civic

¹⁷ Field notes.

¹⁸ B. Latour, 'On Recalling ANT' in J.Law (ed.) *Actor Network theory and after*, Oxford, 1999, p. 121

¹⁹ Interview with Mr.Gurmeet Singh Palahi on 12th Dec. 2008 at Palahi.

amenities in rural areas is so deplorable that despite being a high income state with better infrastructure, Punjab is the second highest morbidity prone state in India due to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene conditions.²⁰

Realizing the gravity of the situation and by virtue of being exposed to high quality civic amenities in the western world, a number of Punjabi NRIs embarked on a mission of developing integrated sustainable development of modern civic amenities in their ancestral villages. Diaspora action in modernization of civic amenities has brought remarkable improvement in the living environment of rural Punjab. Modernization of Kharoudi village is a living example of how transnational action provided a cost effective, participatory, pro-poor and inclusive model of village improvement-often leading to better community relations and capacity building in villages.²¹

The initial efforts of two NRIs who brought not only funds but ideas and technical know how with them led to the institutionalization of the Village Life Improvement Foundation (VLIF) which is currently replicating the Kharoudi model of integrated development in many other villages. Gurmail Singh and Swaran Singh who studied the VLIF model have assessed its impact on health, socio-economic and environmental aspects on people living in villages witnessing substantial involvement.

4.3.2.1 Rural development through VLIF

The role diasporic remittances in drastically transforming the lives of their family members back home is well known and well documented. Contrary to the common perception that NRIs either invest in palatial houses or contribute to religious charity, Dr. Raghbir Basi, Professor of Economics of International Development and Provost, Alaska Pacific University exhibited a vision and urge to contribute something unique to the village of his forefathers. Appalled at the squalor and filth around his native village,

²⁰ Gurmail Singh and Swaran Singh, 'Diaspora Philanthropy in Action: An Evaluation of Modernization in Punjab Villages', *Journal of Punjab Studies*, vol. 14 no. 2 .2007,p. 225.

²¹ Ibid.

muddy streets with no light, overflowing drains and waste piling up ankle deep, stinking ponds and abundance of flies and mosquitoes, Dr. Basi thought of starting to improve all this.²² The idea was to initiate a holistic bottom- up process of integrated sustainable development beginning with building up of basic infrastructure facilities centered around water supply, sanitation, hygiene and computer education.²³

On his visit to Kharoudi in 1999, Dr. Basi discussed his ideas first with the village elders and later on with the whole village by calling a village assembly. With an enthusiastic and unanimous response, it was resolved to construct underground water supply system, cementing village streets and make arrangements for improvement of education in the village. Aware of the many bureaucratic roadblocks, Dr. Basi effectively leveraged his social and political capital by consulting Dr. Shamsheer Singh Babra of World Bank, who arranged his meeting with S. Prakash Singh Badal (the then Chief Minister of Punjab) who promised a dollar-for-dollar assistance from the government.²⁴

Utilizing his social capital further, Dr. Basi consulted Dr. Gurdev Gill, a retired physician from Vancouver, Canada and a compatriot from his native village Kharoudi. Dr. Gill had already been working to enhance mutual understanding between Indo-Canadians and Canadians at large and to provide community services when needed through the 'India-Canadian Friendship Society of British Columbia' or the ICFS of which he was the founder President. Dr. Gill readily agreed to become a partner in the venture and also provided leadership in the proposed rural development work. The result of the efforts of the two social entrepreneurs was the Villlage Life Improvement Board (VLIB) which was set up in Kharoudi in 1999.²⁵

The most difficult task of mobilization of resources for execution of the project was made easy by the overwhelming support from fellow NRIs abroad. Dr.Gill used the good

²² Raghbir S.Basi, 'NRI Contribution to Rural Development in Punjab: Constraints and Possibilities.' in Dhesi,Autar and Singh, Gurmail (eds) *Rural Development: A Success Story Going Astray.*,New Delhi, 2007, pp. 65-91.

²³ Singh and Singh , *Diaspora Philanthropy...*,Op. Cit., p. 229.

²⁴ Basi, Op. Cit., p.72.

²⁵ Singh and Singh, *Diaspora Philanthropy...*,Op. Cit., p. 230.

offices and the established reputation of ICSF and prevailed upon the Canadian International Development Aid Agency (CIDA) and other NRIs for funding their proposed projects. It was not only monetary contribution that came in but the ICSF also provided technology to the VLIF and Dr. Gill imparted technical know how and training to the VLIF contractor.²⁶ Thus, with sufficient resources and active involvement of all stakeholders, Kharoudi got modern civic amenities and became a role model for rest of the rural areas in Punjab. The impact of VLIF model, implemented due to the efforts of transnational actors, has been aptly summed up in the following lines:

Today village Kharoudi had cemented concrete roads with solar street lights, underground piped water supply, a sewerage treatment plant with almost universal provision of water supply and sewer connection to every household. The VLIF has also developed three parks in the village, and constructed a crematorium, a new room in the school for solar operated computer education, underground telephone cables for better connectivity, a community centre with guest house facilities, a specially created stone sculpture memorial adorned with the inscription of 'In Honour of the Gaddarites' in honour of the freedom fighters from the village, and trees around the village. The modernization has been widely acclaimed and the village attracted the attention of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the ex-President of India, who paid a personal visit to the village and commended the contribution of VLIF.²⁷

The success of the VLIF model however, did not remain confined to only one village. Inspired from the remarkable transformation in Kharoudi, many other resourceful NRIs from other villages in Punjab also approached the VLIF to replicate the Kharoudi model in their villages. Brahmpur was second such village adopted by VLIF. Here, the main visionary was Mr. Anant Pal Singh- again a Canadian citizen and NRI from the village who contributed substantially for the modernization of Brahmpur.

4.3.2.2 Impact Assesment of VLIF Model

As far as the cost effectiveness of the VLIF model is concerned, a study conducted by Saxena on behalf of the Government of India of a comaparative analysis of the Kharoudi

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Singh and Singh, *Diaspora Philanthropy...* Op. Cit., p. 230.

model vis-avis the technology adopted by the government of Punjab in provision of sanitation facilities in Ulana village, reveals that the per capita cost of the VLIF technology is cheaper by 30% than that of the Ulana technology.²⁸

The most significant impact of the VLIF model has been on the health and living conditions of the village population. In the study conducted by Singh and Singh to assess the impact of the model on health and environment of Kharoudi village it was found that proper and adequate provision of water supply, sewage and sanitation facilities had helped reduce diarrhoeal morbidity by 36%. The incidence of many other water borne diseases also registered a significant decline.²⁹

The model is participatory in nature and has also been instrumental in capacity building at the village level. Every project started in the village is deliberated and approved unanimously in the village assembly. In Kharoudi and Brahmipur the projects were implemented with the active participation of the residents of the village. On completion, the ownership of the projects was passed on to the local board with functionaries cutting across all segments of the villagers including members of the most vulnerable sections and the functionaries of village level elected bodies or Panchayats.

The VLIF further aims to extend its domain by enabling Punjabi diaspora from all over the world to come together and pool resources and ideas for modernization of their ancestral villages back home. Whosoever approaches them, the organization helps them in getting a village development proposal prepared, work out least cost estimates, contacting village NRIs abroad, providing names of experienced and approved contractors, overseeing progress of work, consulting Government officials in Punjab to obtain matching funds and establishing a local NGO and helping to overcome other hurdles in the implementation in their village development project.³⁰

²⁸ Saxena, Shipra, *Kharoudi Village of Punjab: Model of Cleanliness*. New Delhi. Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation. Ministry of Rural Development. Government of India, 2005.

²⁹ Singh and Singh, *Op. Cit.*, p. 238.

³⁰ Gurdev S.Gill, 'Modern Approaches to Sanitation in Villages', in Dhesei, Autar and Singh, Gurmail (eds), *Rural Development: A Success Story Going Astray*, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 37-64.

4.3.3 Dhahan Kaleran, Distt. Nawanshahr

In this small village located in the Doaba district of Nawanshahr, the impact of transnational processes can be determined by carefully examining the operations and achievements of a trust established by a Canada based NRI and sustained with active collaboration of fellow NRIs. Like other NRI villages, Dhahan also highlights the potential of new communication and transportation technologies to unite diaspora around the world making it increasingly possible for the globally dispersed community to mobilize capital, resources and expertise for political and social and economic causes in the home countries. An overview of the NRI initiated Trust at Dhahan, conducted by Mellisa Kelly in 2006 is crucial in understanding how transnational linkages between diaspora and homeland can be forged and sustained through various means.

4.3.3.1 Formation and Functioning of the Guru Nanak Mission Medical and Educational Trust

Like many other Punjabi born Indo- Canadians described earlier in the chapter, who took initiatives to contribute to their home community; S.Budh Singh Dhahan also had the urge to participate in the development process back in his village Dhahan. He had certain specific objectives in mind- to improve the health of the local people by providing a hospital with professional doctors, nurses and equipment, increase villagers' access to quality education by establishing a senior secondary school and uplift the status of woman by starting a nursing college wherein girls from neighboring villages could study for a Bachelor's course in nursing.³¹

Budh Singh adopted a transnational way of achieving change at the local level. He solicited the support of his Punjabi network overseas to aid in the development of the Trust, and as a result, in 1981 the organization became a collaborative project where

³¹ Mellisa Kelly, 'The Guru Nanak Mission Medical and Educational Trust: An Exploration of Diaspora-Homeland Linkages in a Voluntary Organization.', Essay accessed at www.essays.se, 2004, pp.1-37.

Punjabis living in Punjab and Punjabis living abroad could constitute a transnational sphere to work together for the betterment of their shared homeland. Started in the year 1981, the Trust has now grown into a large organization occupying 35 acres where it runs a hospital, a senior secondary school, a nursing college and a drug and alcohol de addiction centre. More than 200 people are employed at the Trust which is now planning to add a Trauma Centre and a Medical College to its site.³²

Administratively, the Trust is run at 4 distinct levels- President and Founder Budh Singh who spends most of his time abroad raising funds ; Vice President who is responsible for handling the Trust in Budh Singh's absence ; Financial Manager who handles accounting matters and Public Relations Manager who coordinates the organizations' publishing materials. As far as decision making is concerned, the Trust strives to come to consensus on each issue usually through meetings and passing resolutions.

The Trust's President S.Budh Singh, a Canadian resident has been the driving force behind the success of the organization since its establishment. Mr.Singh had been quite active while in Canada, often helping people from Punjab settle there. Due to his active life in Canada, Budh Singh built up, both in Punjab and in Canada, a network of Punjabi people who respected him and believed in his capabilities. It is this social capital that Mr. Singh developed over the years that comes in handy to mobilize resources and expertise for his projects. The diaspora support to the Trust can also be ascertained from an estimate published by the Trust in their Jeevan Sewa magazine which reveals that 80% of the funding comes through Budh Singh's fundraising trips abroad. As John Hariss rightly notes, using networks of trust and mutual support is characteristic of many Indian organizations and is something that if used in the right context can make some individuals very successful.³³ Mr.Singh has carefully employed this traditional strategy to further his cause.

³² Ibid

³³ John Harriss, 'Widening the Radius of Trust: Ethnographic Explorations of Trust and Indian Business', *Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 9, 2003, p.768.

However, it is not only money that the Diaspora contributed to the Trust. Transnationalism has had a major impact on the Trust's vision, objectives, fundraising strategy and approach, making the Trust an outward looking association with extensive global dimensions. It is interesting to know that the idea to establish a Trust was itself an outcome of Budh Singh's long years of experience of staying in Canada. Singh noticed how other groups such as Jews were organizing themselves and were working together to contribute to their communities' welfare back home. This inspired Budh Singh to mobilize Punjabi community, especially Sikh diaspora, for funds and cooperation.

In an interview to M.Kelly, Budh Singh explained:

Involving the Diaspora is not just about money. Money is very important; if you do not have money you cannot do anything. But other things are more important than money.³⁴

He is evidently referring to the host of new ideas that members of Diaspora can bring with them after being exposed to them in the developed countries where they have staying for many years. For instance, the Trust's ongoing emphasis on girls' education and employment, especially through the Nursing Institute may be heavily fuelled by the western conceptions of gender equality. The influence of diaspora's transnational experiences can also be seen at the levels of administration of the Trust. Punjabis living and working abroad have gradually acquired and become accustomed to new standards of running an organization. Barj Dhahan, Budh Singh's Canada based son emphasized that Diaspora Punjabis have come to expect organizations to be open and reliable as they perceive government and organizations in the West to be. Therefore, in an attempt to reach Indo-Canadian community in a more Canadian way, Barj and some of his colleagues of Sikh Diaspora based in Vancouver started a new organization, the Canada India Education Society, which advises the Guru Nanak Trust on organizational matters and in that role, encourages the organization to follow western operating norms. Significantly, the organization is also able to directly collect the funds from the donors,

³⁴ Kelly, Op. Cit., p.28.

whereupon it can issue tax exemptions and receipts as per Canadian regulations.³⁵ Thus, if Budh Singh is Punjab's link to Canada and the West, his son Barj Singh is Canada's link to Punjab. This is how they manage to create a transnational public sphere enabling maximum number of transnational actors to participate in the process of change in rural Punjab.

4.3.4 Dhesian Kahna, Distt. Jalandhar

A small village in district Jalandhar roughly one hour's drive from Palahi, Dhesian Kahna also draws significantly upon transnational networks in order to bring about transformations at the village level. The village has about 800 houses, 4 Gurudwaras and 6 banks. Like Palahi, Dhesian Kahna also witnessed lack of formal developmental assistance from state, as is evident from the condition of roads connecting the village to external routes. The village had been a site of out migration for several decades. Dhesian Kahna's example shows that immigrant communities, despite their different areas of settlement overseas can still effectively operate as a network across these different sites.

In a study conducted in the village in 2002 of a development project initiated and funded by the overseas members of the village, the impact of these transnational networks and linkages is clearly evident.

The project, aimed at draining a large pond of stagnant water in order to convert it into a village park was initiated by Mr. Dhesi, an Indian trained engineer who went to Canada in 1969. Mr. Dhesi had set up Mehroki Patti development Fund which is financed substantially by NRIs and which undertakes projects for village development and welfare. Mr. Dhesi who is based in Vancouver and is unable to visit his village frequently to his business concerns, primarily engages himself in mobilization of funds by leveraging his contacts abroad, while his cousin from Bradford, England oversees and manages the actual project during his annual visits to the village.³⁶ Each of these

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Roberts, Op. Cit., p. 88.

individuals represents different processes of migration and settlement overseas. Both are financially secure and well established in their countries of settlement but both maintain important links to their original migratory site-their village.

Mr. Dhesi's cousin who manages the projects in the village had to face problems due to lack of cooperation in the initial stages. Gradually things improved as other village improvement projects received funding and there was increased interest from both village officials and NRIs. Mr. Dhesi however is frustrated and concerned about the long term viability of such projects if the future generations of NRIs did not exhibit similar enthusiasm and involvement in village improvement schemes.

4.3.5 Athouli, Distt. Kapurthala

In the district of Kapurthala and not very far from Palahi is another village called Athouli which may not be as developed as Palahi but is certainly witnessing the impact of transnational linkages at the grassroots levels. Like Palahi, Athouli has a sizeable number of its residents who have migrated and settled overseas. It was due to the efforts of one such NRI –Mr. Lehmbur Singh (now a resident of Canada) that a trust by the name of Guru Nanak Nursing Education Trust (GNNET) was set up in Athouli in 2002.³⁷ in this endeavour, he was assisted by other NRIs of the same village, by the local people of the village and prominent citizens of nearby town of Phagwara. The Trust is registered under the Society Act XXI of 1860 and as amended by Punjab Amendment Act of 1957 having its head office in Athouli itself. The Trust was set up with an aim to provide quality education and vocational training to rural masses, especially woman. However it is now taking up various problems of the villagers for example the issue of lack of a proper sewerage system. The trust is now working on setting up a sewage plant in the village.³⁸

³⁷ www.gnnnet.org , the official website of Guru Nanak Nursing and Education Trust, Athouli.

³⁸ Interview with Mr. Vivek Puri, Chief Administrator, G.N. Institute of Health Sciences and Research on 19th Dec. 2008 at Athouli.

ਮਹਿਕਮਾ ਪੁਸਤਕ

NAMES OF THE DONORS OF GURU NANAK NURSING EDUCATIONAL TRUST V.P.O. Athouli, Bhagwara, Distt. Kapurthala (Pb.)

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Figure 4.3 List of NRI contributors to the Guru Nanak Nursing Education Trust, Athouli

A major achievement of the Trust, however, is the setting up of 5 acre Guru Nanak Institute of Health Sciences and Research in Athouli-a nursing college recognized by the Indian Nursing Council, New Delhi. Mr. Vivek Puri, chief administrator of the college informed that the nursing institute which is connected to various hospitals in the nearby cities and provides employment to women of the village, has never faced any dearth of funds due to the constant pouring in of NRI contributions. This was made possible by the efforts of Mr. Lehmer Singh who has successfully formed a network of fellow NRIs settled not just in Canada, but in other parts of the world who are participating actively in the activities of the Trust in the village. (See Figure 4.3)

4.3.6 Other Examples

Apart from the prominent cases of transnational action in rural Punjab discussed above, there are numerous other instances within Punjab where Diaspora is playing active role in the development process of various small towns. One such example is that of Phagwara, a small town situated in the heart of Doaba in district Kapurthala. Phagwara has been an important site for out migration since last few decades. A large number of residents from this town and its surrounding villages have settled in countries like USA, UK and Canada. Phagwara, in the past few years has been benefitting from the contributions made to various development projects through a Home Town Association that has been formed by members of Diaspora from this town. A home town association by the name of Phagwara Welfare Society (PWS) was started by 12 well established NRIs in Surrey, British Columbia in 2002 with the motive of contributing in the field of education, sports, environment and other social services.³⁹ Though based in Canada, the society is able to mobilize funds from across the world wherever Punjabi Diaspora is scattered primarily through its online presence. The society's website has an online donation form through which those interested can contribute towards different welfare projects in Phagwara. PWS also organizes fundraising dinners every year for different projects. Concerned with the problem of Punjabi youth being increasingly gripped by the menace of drugs ,an

³⁹ www.phagwarawelfare.com , the official website of Phagwara Welfare Society.

annual Sports festival is also sponsored by the society with an aim of encouraging the youth of Punjab to turn away from drugs and engage in productive activities like sports. Another significant contribution of PWS is towards the field of education. The society provides funds to Guru Nanak College, Phagwara on an annual basis to upgrade infrastructure and facilities, besides reaching out to the needy students. Very recently, a mortuary was also built in the Phagwara considering the demand for the same from the residents of Phagwara.

4.4 Concluding Analysis

In the preceding pages an attempt has been made to highlight the dynamics of Punjabi diaspora as a transnational community demonstrating how diasporic activities across national borders emerge, operate and change and how they are related to processes of governance in increasingly complex and interconnected world. The processes and practices of transnationalism create a sort of public sphere with diaspora as a significant actor and with a substantial role in influencing development outcomes at the grassroots level. The case studies from five villages in four districts of the Doaba region- which has experienced maximum out migration, show varying degrees of impact on rural development. However there are a lot may aspects that are shared by all of them. Based on these, a brief analysis can be made about the nature, practice and impact of diasporic transnationalism on grassroots development from these case studies:

4.4.1 Diaspora- Beyond Remittances

The most commonly held notion about diaspora's role in development relates to Remittances or the micro level individual transfers of money to families or households in the home country. There is no denying the fact that India is one of the highest remittance receiving countries and the Punjabi diaspora makes a significant contribution to this pool. Remittances have no doubt been instrumental in uplifting many households by improving their economic conditions, especially in rural areas. In fact, such remittances to families

engaged in agriculture in rural Punjab were partly responsible for the success of the capital intensive Green Revolution strategy in Punjab. Besides remittances, charities to religious institutions are commonly associated with diasporas. Many Gurudwaras in villages of Punjab receive huge donations from NRIs every year.⁴⁰

Without questioning the contribution of individually sent remittances and other forms of private transfers to poverty reduction and economic development in countries of origin, the case studies demonstrate that diasporas of today are more than just remittances or philanthropy. They have moved beyond individualistic activities and are actively engaging themselves as community promoting collective action in initiating change and development in their native places. In the recent years, the diasporic contributions have moved from the ubiquitous memorial gates dotting the countryside to development projects like schools, hospitals and village infrastructures. This collective action has been made possible by the advanced communication and transportation technologies like the internet, cheaper travel across countries which has facilitated community formation and networking like never before. This discernible shift from individual to collective effort is also indicative of diaspora's potential as a vital component in the development process.

4.4.2 Beyond Funds — 'Social Remittances'

In the cases discussed, it is evident that diaspora involvement in their villages goes beyond mere monetary contributions or donation of funds. Transnational actors like the diaspora also import new knowledge, ideas and mindsets from their countries of settlement in the West to their countries of origin.

Due to their long period of exposure to the developed western world and living environment in countries like the US, UK and Canada, diasporic communities get acquainted and impressed with the kind of technical know how and services available there and they wish to replicate the same in their own villages back home. Most of the updated environment friendly technologies introduced in Palahi village were the outcome of inputs of NRIs from the village. The VLIF model of Kharoudi has been borrowed

⁴⁰ Field notes.

heavily from the technical know how imported from the West by Dr.Gill, an NRI based in Canada. Similarly, in Dhahan the Trust runs largely according to the organizational principles borrowed from Canada via transnational actors like Barj Singh. Thus, the theory about 'brain drain' getting converted into 'brain gain' is validated to a large extent through these instances.

Besides technical knowledge, diaspora have also helped transfer a new social thinking characterized by gender equality and equal opportunity to the villages in Punjab where girls are being increasingly encouraged to get education and training and take up jobs. The setting up of girls' schools and Nursing institutes in villages like Athouli and Dhahan and running of computer courses in Palahi where girls are enrolled in large numbers are a testimony to this fact. Thus, by sharing new knowledge and ideas and fusing them with the local customs, diaspora have helped speed up adoption and acceptance of social change.

4.4.3 Myth of Return

The myth of return – a longing or desire to return to the homeland – has been traditionally associated with all diaspora. Contrary to this, most of the diasporic entrepreneurs involved in developmental activities in their native villages or towns as discussed in the cases never expressed any desire of returning permanently to their homelands. In fact it is their global mobility that enables them to lead transnational lives and engage effectively in transnational processes. This further highlights the fact that migration is not a one-off event but a dynamic process. Today, it is not necessary for migrants to return once and for all to their countries of origin. Through advanced and cheaper means of communication and transportation, many migrants have developed continuing, intense, long distance, border crossing connections over years and sometimes over generations. The radically improved technical possibilities allow diaspora to foster links with their societies of origin through the mobile, telephone, fax, satellite television, the internet and by remitting money through globalized banking systems or informal channels. This technological revolution enables migrants to foster double loyalties, to travel back and forth, to foster relationships, to work and to do business simultaneously in

distant places. Therefore it has become increasingly clear that diaspora have become progressively more transnational in their orientations and can thus be simultaneously involved in two or more societies at the same time.

4.4.4 Motivational Factors

The common myth that diasporic contribution to development is driven primarily by selfish motives like honoring family name or satisfying personal egos is falsified to some extent through the case studies. While motivations may vary from person to person, the case studies do not support the impressionistic assertion that NRI investment in developmental projects is for personal gains- so that roads, communication and water supply etc. improves in their native villages for their own convenience whenever they visit during holidays or decide to return permanently. In reality, very few of the trustees and contributors to the projects in villages mentioned in the case studies actually stay in their villages. On their visits to India, most of them stay in their houses built in nearby towns or cities. The motivation to contribute to the upliftment of the villages comes, in most cases, from their desire to bring them at par with the villages in the developed countries where they have been staying for years.

4.4.5 Enhanced Community Participation

Development via transnational public sphere involves not only diaspora as an important factor but also ensures wider community participation as is exemplified in the case studies of villages of Punjab – especially in Palahi – through an annual survey of the village and also through assemblies conducted during festivals where maximum participation of villagers is sought. Similarly, in the case of VLIF model in Kharoudi and Brahmipur, before starting any project, the village council is consulted and decisions are arrived at through broad consensus. Here, it is the social capital of the village that makes it relatively easier to elicit participation and cooperation. Since those initiating and implementing developmental projects also belong to the village, they are readily trusted by the villagers than the government officials whom they see as outsiders. This further

highlights the advantage of applying a bottom up approach rather than a top down approach to development.

4.4.6 Keeping the State In

An important observation in most of the case studies is that while it is the government apathy or state's inability to provide basic civic amenities or implement developmental schemes in the countryside that encouraged the diaspora to emerge as a significant player in the developmental process, yet the state has not been completely removed from this transnational public sphere. In villages like Palahi and Kharoudi, the transnational sphere created with the help of transnational actors like the diaspora, NGOs and local community shows a strong preference to 'keep the state in'. However the state involvement is primarily as a funding source in the projects initiated by NRIs. For instance, the Punjab Government's scheme NRI 2.35 which promises a matching grant or a dollar - for- dollar assistance to the projects started by NRIs. Similarly, under the VLIF model, the water supply and sanitation program was clubbed with the Government's Total Sanitation Campaign which led to better and more inclusive outcomes. Such informal institutional arrangements often enhance the capacity and effectiveness of the state in performing its tasks of public service delivery.

This combination of resources allows the delivery of services that neither the state nor any civil society organization can provide alone. These types of relationships are best characterized by what Evans calls 'complimentarity' between public and private actors. The dynamics in such a relationship can be compared to a relay race- the Government provides a fundamental infrastructure up to a predetermined point and then passes the baton to non state provider to complete the goal.

4.4.7 Uneven Patterns of Development

The case studies of five villages provide sufficient evidence of the development brought into the Punjab countryside through diasporic initiatives and involvement. However, it is to be noted that all the villages belong to the Doaba belt of Punjab which has historically been the most significant out migration site and therefore witnesses maximum

concentration of NRIs. It is no wonder then that diaspora's influence is most visible in this region. Compared to this, the other two regions of Punjab – the Majha belt and the Malwa belt – are largely underdeveloped with their countryside presenting a different picture altogether. This disparity is generally attributed to the very thin NRI presence and therefore less diasporic connections with these regions. Malwa region has been witnessing maximum farmer suicides in the past. Majha belt is only recently experiencing a trend of migrations to the developed countries and it will take some time before its implications can be studied. Presently, Punjab's countryside displays a landscape of uneven development. These regional imbalances within the state are indicative of the limited applicability of the diaspora led development model as it cannot be replicated in villages or places which lack adequate NRI presence and support.

4.4.8 Challenge of sustaining Transnational Linkages

A vital concern that emerges from the case studies examining transnational linkages is that of the long term sustainability of these processes and practices. While diaspora's role as partners in development has been firmly established, the fundamental challenge is to secure ongoing support from diasporas in the long run. In almost all the cases discussed, the diaspora entrepreneurs belonged to the first generation of migrants. They have deep attachments to their native villages and feel an urge to contribute to their development. The future generations would care a bit less about this aspect and to convince and attract them towards their country of origin will not be an easy task, unless the central and the state governments take concrete steps to harness this important resource. It is essential to ensure sustained communication and encourage networks and also to have a policy structure that encourages transnational practices that may not be sufficient yet necessary for positively impacting development outcomes at local levels. It is here that the state can play an instrumental role by engaging in *Mandating*, *Facilitating* and *Endorsing* functions as discussed in the last chapter.

CONCLUSION

Development is a complex process that involves multiple actors and processes. The traditional paradigms of development involving traditional actors and practices are essential but no longer sufficient in ensuring the over all development and empowerment of those at the grass roots whose welfare is threatened by the bureaucratic indifference and politics of the state. This necessitates a need to think beyond the state and the national systems of governance. This new development thinking, which belies a purely 'state centric' model, is further facilitated by the intensification of processes of globalization and de-territorialization resulting in transnational flows of people, capital, ideas and lifestyles. This transnationalism has enabled new actors like the diaspora communities to play a significant role in shaping development outcomes at the local levels. This study was aimed at a better understanding of the dynamics of Diaspora as a central actor in Transnational Public sphere and the nature and impact of its participation on local governance outcomes and also in redefining the central assumptions of local governance.

Until recently, diasporas were mostly studied from a cultural perspective or as a by product of the 'brain drain' process. This study has tried to establish that in order to understand diasporas as potential development actors, they should be approached from a transnational perspective. Diasporas are no longer merely passive migrants who have moved to greener pastures for better economic opportunities. Contemporary diasporas have created a transnational public sphere for themselves which enables them to play a proactive role in the affairs of their homeland. This transnational public sphere lies essentially at the intersection

of 'global' and 'local' and is able to contribute to the process of development due to its ability to effectively mobilize different forms of capital across border- *social* (trust, relationships, values, meanings); *financial* (remittances, investments); *intellectual* (skills, know-how, networks); *political* (lobbying, advocacy) and in some cases *cultural*.

Communication and information are two important components of any public sphere. In the case of transnational communities like the diasporas, communication networks play a pivotal role in creating a community based on a shared identity. Technological innovations like the electronic media have been instrumental in the formation of transnational communities across borders, virtual or real. This has brought a shift in the way diasporas are conceptualized in the present times.

Secondly, it is important to note that diaspora communities are using these transnational public spheres to establish relationships with the state rather than circumvent it. As demonstrated through various instances of diaspora led development, state has not completely retreated from this public sphere. The governments are increasingly playing the role of a facilitator in encouraging a model of self governance, for instance, in many villages of Punjab which has helped it earn it the distinction of being a transnational space. Diaspora led development leans towards self help, self reliance and are community based and therefore leads to a more inclusive and participatory form of governance.

The emphasis on the role of state also indicates that self mobilization of transnational diasporic communities is not sufficient if their engagement with the homeland affairs is to be sustained over a long time. Their initiatives, programmes and practices need to be institutionalized in order to derive long term benefits. The state, which included local, state and national governments have a central role to play in cultivating these assets by engaging constructively with them. Thus it would be wrong to assume that the state withers away when transnational communities attain their own dynamics.

The above propositions are validated through the case study rural Punjab which qualifies as a transnational space due to the spread and intensity of transnational linkages and processes

that it is embedded in. Assisted by the new and advanced technologies like the satellite broadcasting and the internet, the shared identity of the diasporic community is reinforced and this facilitates the formation of a transnational public sphere as in the case of Punjabi diasporic community. Punjabi diaspora, as exemplified by the case study of five villages in Doaba region in eastern Punjab, is using this transnational sphere effectively to contribute to change and development in the Punjab countryside. To a certain extent, the case study has exploded some myths about the nature of diasporic participation in the affairs of the homeland. At the same time, it has also raised issues that merit further research and investigation, the most important being the challenge of ensuring long term sustainability of diasporic engagement with the countries of origin.

Diasporic engagement in the villages of Punjab has shown that due to the creation of a transnational sphere, the role of diasporas is no longer restricted to merely being a source of remittances. Transnational processes and practices have enabled them to act collectively for the welfare of the villages. This collective action, facilitated by the proficient leveraging of networks and of social capital, has encouraged a sort of self governance model in these villages further leading to enhanced community participation and inclusiveness. Transnational spheres constituted by Punjabi diaspora facilitate the flow of not merely funds but also ideas, technical know how and progressive mindsets. Challenging the myth of a desire to return to the homeland, diaspora members who are actively involved in development processes of the villages are doing so successfully without returning permanently to these villages. Being a part of the transnational sphere, they are able to lead transnational lives and engage in two societies at the same time. The case study also points to the limited applicability of diaspora led development model. The countryside of Punjab exhibits an uneven landscape as the areas with thin diasporic presence have not attained the level of development witnessed in the five villages of Doaba region.

When analyzing the role of diasporas in development, it is necessary to remember that the term 'development' is not uncontested. Diaspora initiatives which are often criticized as being too local in focus or too short term oriented should rather be seen as representing a different perspective on development. In order to mobilize transnational communities like

the diasporas and facilitate their participation in the development process, there needs to be a shift in attitudes. It is important to ensure that diasporas are not seen as instruments to achieve governmental aims but potential partners to engage in dialogue, seek common ground and achieve shared objectives.

Governments should facilitate relationships between diaspora communities and their counterparts, incorporate how diasporas really engage with home regions in country's developmental policies and enable different tiers of government, local, state national to engage effectively with diaspora groups. For successful mobilization, there is a need to develop an infrastructure that would facilitate communications between diaspora communities and their homeland. Otherwise diaspora initiatives will be found too parochial, too local and too short term.

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